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He was so intent on following that he did not notice my door ajar. In his hand he had an automatic pistol.

CATACLYSM

By

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WE were seated on the veranda of the Alpine hotel, enjoying the indescribable magnificence of the sunset, golden, rose, and purple on that immense panorama of snowclad peaks.

"The Almighty does well to stage such a spectacle," I remarked to my holiday acquaintance, a jolly rubicund oldish man, whom I had discovered to be no less a personage than Professor Massingford, the celebrated physicist. "It dwarfs us fussy little humans to something like a proper humility. What are we in comparison with those eternal giants displaying that vast glory to the illimitable void?"

Professor Massingford readjusted the steel-rimmed glasses on his nose, and peered at me over their tops.

"I suppose you novelists can't help getting debauched yourselves by the sloppy romanticism you professionally ladle out," he replied. "To my coldly precise scientific brain your statement is rumbustious nonsense. Those peaks are not eternal. We can even approximately determine the date when, on the contrary, they were an ocean bed. And, moreover, nothing is less certain than their indefinite continuance. It may depend entirely on the caprice of one of those fussy little humans you ignorantly despise. The human spirit, whatever that mystery may be, may nevertheless be the one ultimate arbiter of the cosmos. Incredible though it will be to you, the factual existence at this moment of those immense upreared masses, of the world itself, is due not a little to your humble servant, *moi qui vous parle*."

I stared at him. I had become fairly intimate with Massingford these past few days, and nothing in his manner or ideas had led me to suspect a latent insanity in him. Quite the reverse. He was one of the most humorously matter-of-fact men I had ever met, and genuine humour—I do not say wit—is the infallible guarantee of a sane mind.

"You're joking," I said.

"Not in the least. I can imagine that it gives your complacency a jolt. But it is an exact fact. To a certain extent you owe it to me that at this moment you are here to enjoy that pleasing polychrome effect of reflected and refracted sunlight upon those crags and snowfields and glaciers —you owe it to me that there is any *here* at all—that an explosive disintegration of this small planet is not now propagating an incomputable disturbance throughout the infinity of stellar space."

This was certainly one of his elaborate jests.

"How?" I asked. "I'll buy it."

He shook his head.

ILLUSTRATED BY FORTUNINO MATANIA, R.I.

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"No. You'll put it in a book. I don't see why I should give you copy for nothing. You fellows are an unscrupulously immoral lot of thieves."

"We have to be to make an honest living," said I. "But in this case I'll make an exception. Tell me the yarn—and if it's any good we'll go halves. And as an earnest of good faith, I'll buy you an *apéritif* now."

"It isn't a yarn. It's a fact. I don't know whether you have brains enough to tell it. It requires a certain amount of education. Real education—not Latin verses in the fifth form. But I'll have the *apéritif*, anyway."

I signalled to the waiter.

"Well?" I said, expectantly, as he sipped his Dubonnet *sec*.

"You are taking advantage of a simple-souled scientist," he complained. "However, I suppose I must give in. Did you ever hear of Vandermost?"

"Never," I replied, emphatically. "What is it—a patent medicine?"

He sighed.

"That is the sort of ignorance I have learnt to expect from you ignoble crew of fictioneers. Vandermost, my dear sir, is the name of the greatest physicist who ever lived."

"I take your word for it. What about him?"

"His father went to the United States as a stowaway and made some score million dollars out of oil. Antony Vandermost inherited them, *ætat.* twenty-two, and hid himself from the world with the only thing that interested him—to find out something about the real texture of this apparently material universe whereof we are mysteriously part."

I put up my hands.

"*Kamerad!* I never could understand the first thing about science, and I'm too old to begin now."

"I think it highly probable. But doubtless even you are aware of the elementary fact that all matter is reducible to specific atoms and that those atoms are each infinitely minute solar systems of electrons grouped about a nucleus. You may possibly be aware that if one could disrupt that nucleus so that it would combine with another nucleus, we should be able to transmute the elements. Lead, for instance, might be turned into gold. And in so doing, a colossal energy would assuredly be released."

"I have read about it in the Sunday papers," I admitted. "A lump of sugar contains enough energy to blow up a battleship, or words to that effect. The newspaper never explained how, and I was not interested enough to inquire. I am content to have the simple faith of a child in these matters. Go ahead."

"Well, Vandermost built himself a marvellous laboratory in the Bavarian Alps. From time to time he startled the scientific world by quietly issuing some mathematical demonstration which revolutionized all existing theories, but rarely did anyone see him. International Congresses knew him not. He had absolutely no itch for publicity. His was a purely scientific brain, perhaps the most austerely so which has ever existed."

"THIS is an opening after my own heart," I mocked. "I know that austere scientist. Surely he falls like a boob for some pretty chit of a girl."

"Your scientists doubtless would," he said. "You create them after your own image. But Antony Vandermost never knew there was such a thing as a girl. The only thing that mattered to him was to know all that could be known about the atom. He certainly knew more about it than anyone else. Much as I suppose Buddhist monks regard the Grand Lama, with an almost superstitious reverence we workaday professors regarded him, locked away in his Alpine hermitage. His slightest pronouncement came vested with an almost superhuman authority." He sipped again at his Dubonnet. "Consequently, when one day I received a telegram asking me to come out to him, I went at once.

"He was certainly an extraordinary fellow. About forty years of age. Tall and cadaverously thin. Somewhat bulgy eyes under a bald brow. Clothes that looked as if he had stolen them from a scarecrow. No society manners at all. He scarcely shook hands with me in the cheerless cell-like parlour whither I had been led by the old German housekeeper who had admitted me to this house perched high up on the mountain.

"'I'm much obliged to you for coming, Massingford,' he said. 'I've got something immensely important to tell you.' His bulgy waterish eyes looked at me. 'You may as well know at once what it is. I can disrupt the atomic nucleus.'

"I jumped. For years, of course, scores of physicists over the world have been working intensively on that problem, in the hope of releasing and harnessing the atomic energy which would revolutionize every phase of human life. As perhaps you know, as a laboratory experiment on an exceedingly minute scale, we have succeeded in knocking an electron or so out of an atomic system. But no one had ever succeeded in disrupting the nucleus. It is bound together by the same cosmic

force that binds the universe. So you can imagine I was startled.

" ' Do you mean to tell me you've actually done it ? ' I asked.

" He smiled, a grim sort of smile.

" ' Not yet. But I can, and I'm going to. I wanted to tell you about it first. That's why I telegraphed you. You're the only man in the world I consider competent to appreciate my success.'

" I was flattered, and said so. Vandermost was not in the habit of paying compliments to his fellow-scientists. Far from it. He considered most of us little better than imbeciles, and had no scruple in publishing his opinion.

" He glanced at his watch.

" ' It's time for lunch,' he said, ' and I daresay you are ready for it.' I was. It seemed an eternity since I had had breakfast on the train, and it had been a long cold motor-ride up to this aerie. ' We'll discuss the matter afterwards. This is where we eat.'

" He led the way into another ascetically bare room where a couple of young Germans were waiting for him. He introduced them as his assistants, Franz Schmidt and Hugo Breidenbach. The first was a cropped-haired blond Teutonic giant, the other was of the dark South German type. Both muttered some insignificant banality. They struck me as the sublimification of university research-students, their entire intelligence concentrated on to the pin-point of specialism indicated to them by their Professor, docile machines to do his detail work. I keep a hutch full of such myself.

" Vandermost bade us be seated. As he went to his own chair an immense Alsatian dog got up from in front of it, and flopped down again at his side. ' This is Wolf,' he said to me. ' The only real friend I have in the world. A noble animal.' He spoke with a genuine affection which made me like him better. Until then he had seemed utterly destitute of any human warmth whatever.

" We all took our places, and a quite attractive, rosy-cheeked girl in peasant costume brought in a big tureen of soup. Vandermost took no more notice of her than if she had been an automaton, but the young assistants called her Kätchen and grinned at her. I thought I saw the dark-featured Breidenbach give her a surreptitious pinch as she served him. That sly flirtatiousness cheered me up a little. The glacial bleakness of the place was getting on my nerves.

" We ate our lunch with a constrained minimum of talk. Evidently Vandermost did not take his assistants into his confidence. He said nothing at all about the purpose of my visit, and did not even mention atoms. Most of his attention was devoted to the dog, which he fed with choice morsels from his own plate, caressing it and smiling to it while the animal laid its great head heavily upon his arm, looking up to him with adoring eyes.

" I tried practising my German on the blond Teuton, Schmidt. But I got little response from him other than ' *Ja ?—Jawohl !—Ach so ?* ' at intervals. His mind was evidently not on me at all. His eyes followed Kätchen round the room, and he frowned as she giggled and twisted every time she came near Breidenbach.

" As I say, I was grateful for that little suggestion of amorous intrigue, vulgarly ordinary though it was. It was a relief in that chill taciturnity prevailing at the table. I was glad when the meal was over.

" FOLLOWED by the dog, Vandermost conducted me to his library, a large room filled with books from floor to ceiling, and indicated to me the least uncomfortable chair. He himself did not smoke, but he had no objection to my lighting my pipe.

" ' Now, Massingford,' he said. ' I've no doubt you are bursting with curiosity. Let us get to business. First we'll go through my mathematical demonstration. And I need not say you are welcome to find any flaw in it that may exist.' He wheeled towards me a small table whereon was a thick wad of papers neatly fastened together, and brought up another chair for himself. ' There you are. And we await your verdict with complete confidence—don't we, Wolf ? ' He smiled down to the dog he caressed with his long, thin fingers.

" It would be a waste of time to recapitulate even the broad outlines of his abstruse mathematics. I spent some hours going through his demonstration—occasionally asking him questions to which he had ever an immediate and convincing answer—and I did so with an excitement that gripped me increasingly. Not even Einstein is a greater mathematician than Vandermost revealed himself to be. It would have been utterly beyond my powers to have initiated that marvellous chain of reasoning, but I know enough to follow on the path he had made. To me it was $a+b=c$. And nowhere could I detect the slightest flaw. Theoretically, at least, he had completely demonstrated the disruptibility of the atomic nucleus under certain conditions. I finished in a blaze of enthusiasm.

" ' By Gad, Vandermost ! ' I said. ' You're right—absolutely right ! It's immense ! I congratulate you—I abase myself before

you! You're the greatest man of the century!'

"He smiled, wanly, indifferently.

"'Thank you,' he replied. 'I wanted the one man who could appreciate it, to do so. Wolf here, of course, takes me for granted. It gratifies me to receive the comprehension of another human brain. A queer little human weakness in myself I should never have expected.' He smiled again. 'That's the theoretical part. Now let me show you the practical side.' He rose from his chair.

"'Do you mean to say you've actually got an apparatus to do this?' I exclaimed, incredulously. 'I can't believe it! Why, the cost must be stupendous!'

"He smiled wanly.

"'It cost me a few million dollars,' he said. 'But you shall see for yourself. Come this way.'

"We went through bare corridors to the wing where his laboratory was situated. It was an extremely large room, lighted from the roof, and filled with an amazing plethora of scientific instruments. The two assistants were working there, silently each upon his own task. Vandermost sent them both out, and locked the door after them.

"Then he took me to an immense piece of apparatus, fitted with huge electrodes connected with thick cables coming from outside.

"'Those two fools haven't the least idea of the purpose of all this,' he said. 'And I prefer that they should remain in ignorance. This is a matter only for a first-class intellect. Now let me explain.'

"Again I'm not going to give you his explanation. You wouldn't understand the elements of it. You must take my word for it that Vandermost had indeed contrived an apparatus which would do what no other man had ever succeeded in doing, which would, in fact, disrupt the nucleus of the atom. The basis of it was an entirely new principle, again beyond your comprehension. But there was no doubt of its practicability. It was a mathematical certitude.

"'By Gad, Vandermost!' I said, enthusiastically. 'If you can now devise an

I became certain that Kätchen and I wondered whether time to finish

engine to harness this energy, you'll be the richest man the world has ever known!'

"He smiled at me.

"'I'm surprised at you, Massingford. Do you think there will be a world after I have pulled that switch?'

"I stared, aghast. In my enthusiasm, that aspect of it had simply not occurred to me, obvious though it was. If one violently released the colossal energy stored in the millions of atoms in the smallest piece of matter practicable for his experiment, shattered their cosmic bonds, so to speak, it was more than probable that other adjacent atoms would be detonated in the shock, *ad infinitum*. The possibility of such a result had long been argued about, *pro* and *con*. It was a thing no one knew.

"'Then you think the release of atomic energy cannot be limited?' I stammered.

"'I am sure it cannot. The optimistic inventors of atomic engines are chasing the impossible. This is not a mere opinion. It is again a mathematical certainty. I have proved it, beyond possibility of doubt. I did not show you those further calculations I have made. I wished you to be convinced first of the practicability of my apparatus. But when we return to the library, I will put them before you. You will see for yourself that it is an absolute certainty that the disruption of one atom

was teasing him deliberately, Vandermost would leave them the little drama.

must inevitably entail the progressive disruption of all the others.'

"I was staring fascinatedly at the switch.

"'And if you pull that——?' I said in a dazed sort of way.

"'Within a fraction of a second not only shall we personally cease to exist—the entire world will vanish. Astronomers on stars a few million light-years away may even see the flash æons hence.' He said it with a certain complacency. Indeed, he was entitled to pride. No human being had ever had such a godlike power of destruction.

"'Phew!' I wiped my brow, suddenly damp. 'But of course you will do no such thing. You are satisfied to have achieved, in potentiality, what no other man could dream of attaining.'

"He smiled.

"'On the contrary, my friend, I certainly propose to pull that switch. I am never satisfied with a merely theoretical demonstration. The ultimate test of any scientific theory is the fact itself. The only way to test this particular thesis is to pull that switch—after, of course, the necessary adjustments have been made. It is harmless enough now. I don't take risks of my imbecile assistants meddling with it. There is always the possibility, you will admit, that I may have overlooked some vital factor, and then nothing will happen. But if I am right, as I am certain I am, then I shall have had one fractional instant of knowing that I was right, in the inconceivable swiftness of thought, before my component atoms disrupt into unconfined energy. As, far away in Cambridge, you similarly ceased to exist, you would not have known what caused that instantaneous cataclysm. It is a compliment I pay to your scientific eminence that I invite you to share my knowledge. Also, as I said, it is a queer little vanity in me. I wanted you to know that it was I whose intellect has thus triumphed.'

"My brain was reeling. I scarcely heard what he said. Of course there might be a flaw somewhere in those later calculations; there was certainly none in the first. Was the man mad? The only thing was to humour him.

"'Well,' I said, 'I should like to go through those other calculations of yours, Vandermost. You may have slipped up somewhere. You owe it to me now that I should have an entirely complete appreciation of the whole thing.'

"'Certainly,' he replied. 'Let us go back to the library. You can go through them at once.'

"We went back to the library, the dog still at our heels. Once more I settled myself in a chair. Once more I went through calculations which were a masterpiece of the higher mathematics. There was no doubt about it. Again it was $a + b = c$. Beyond the smallest peradventure, the disruption of one atom must infallibly entail the disruption of all others. It would be like detonating a shell in the middle of an ammunition dump. It made me feel sick to realize it—to realize that this cadaverous man caressing his dog had but to pull that little switch——

"'Well,' he said, coolly, 'do you find any flaw?'

"I shook my head.

"'I wish I could,' I replied. 'The thing is mathematically certain.'

"He nodded.

"'I knew it was. It's time for dinner. Let's go along. We don't dress here.'

"CARRIED away as I had been with all these marvels, I had not realized how the hours had passed. It was indeed seven o'clock. As I got up to follow him, I almost smiled at the incongruity of that remark about dressing. Dinner-jackets, indeed!—and this terrible fellow had but to walk into his laboratory to blow the world to smithereens! Phew!

"'I'd like to have a further chat with you after dinner,' I said. 'If you'd be so kind.'

"'Certainly,' he answered, equably. 'It was to talk with you that I invited you here. We'll come back to the library.'

"Dinner was a repetition of the midday meal. The rosy-cheeked Kätchen, attractive in her peasant costume, waited on us. The two assistants, Schmidt and Breidenbach, were as terse as before; Breidenbach surreptitiously flirting with Kätchen while Schmidt glowered at them. My host took no heed of them whatever, caressing and feeding his dog in the intervals of commonplace gossip with me. It was all I could do to answer him intelligibly. Of what conceivable interest were all the little personal rivalries and jealousies of Cambridge, when at his whim the whole earth might cease to exist, leaving not even a memory, as if it had never been! I must head him off somehow from that colossally suicidal project. But how? I could not think. Even if the man was mad, it would be no easy matter to prove it and shut him up. Long before I could do anything, he could pull his accursed switch. Suppose I killed him with my own hands, in a sudden murderous attack? Then assuredly I should myself be shut up for life as a madman—and selfishly I recoiled from that sacrifice. I am emphatically not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Meanwhile I watched the incongruous little comedy going on between the two assistants and Kätchen. The instincts which have hitherto ensured the perpetuity of all organic life were normally at work under the very shadow of an annihilation almost beyond imagining. I wondered which of the two young assistants was the favoured lover. Personally I put my money on Schmidt; he was so furiously if suppressedly jealous every time Kätchen and Breidenbach smiled at each other. He almost ceased to answer my attempts at conversation. Presently, I became certain that Kätchen was in fact teasing him deliberately, playing with his jealousy after the manner of young women sure of their conquest. Once, definitely, she gave a quick little smack to Breidenbach's ear, after he had nipped her arm, and looked quickly, almost alarmedly, across to Schmidt. Yes, I imagined his anger could be formidable. He was that type of Teuton which is on occasion insanely violent. Well, well! I wondered whether Vandermost would leave them time to finish their little drama.

"He seemed quite unconscious of what was going on under his eyes. To him, it was supremely unimportant, of course.

"AT last the meal ended, and once more we went into the library, now looking a little more cheerful with rose-shaded electric lights. Once more I put myself in the most comfortable chair, and filled and lit my pipe. It is odd, the automatism with which one performs one's accustomed acts even under the menace of annihilation. I could appreciate that a condemned criminal would want his breakfast as usual before going to execution.

"We sat in silence for those first few minutes, during which I filled my pipe. I was trying to think of a good opening sentence. Vandermost was playing with the dog, rolling it on the floor and tickling it, while the animal growled in mimic ferocity. Finally, I hit on a beginning, humouring his insanity.

"'Of course, there's no hurry about this, Vandermost,' I said.

"He looked up at me.

"'No hurry——?'

"'I mean about pulling your confounded switch. Hang it, man, if you've finished your life's work, there's plenty of us who have not. I for one. I have lots of little things on hand. So have some few hundred million of the rest of us. We're all quite busy.'

"He smiled.

"'Busy—on what? After I have pulled that switch the whole fantastic necessity of being busy will be——' he made a gesture —'will be as if it had never been. What is there to worry about?'

"He appalled me.

"'But still, as I was saying—there's no hurry—after all, this fantastic necessity as you call it is not unpleasant. I can put up with it a little longer. No,' I shook my head, sapiently, as I applied another match to my pipe, 'there's certainly no need for hurry. After all, I expect there are a few problems you have yet to solve.'

"He smiled again. If I could only have thought of some way of killing him without seriously inconveniencing myself, I would have done it there and then, so inhumanly detached was that smile.

"'My dear Massingford,' he said, 'I should not have expected such petty cowardice from you. I imagined you had an intellect.' ('I have,' thought I to to myself, 'and I want to retain possession of it as long as possible.') 'Can't you see there's no reason why I should wait another hour, another minute, even? Obviously, once a human mind has seized the key to this material system which throughout untold æons has blindly perpetuated itself in more and more sentient suffering, there is no longer a reason for enduring that cosmic tyrrany. It is like remaining in prison with the key to the door in your pocket. By an act of my volition, I can terminate that hitherto inescapable sequence of pain and struggle, of myriadfold individual birth and death, at least as far as this globe is concerned. On any ethical ground, I am wrong to have waited so long. It was a little privilege I arrogated to myself. Now, however, I have gratified my vanity by this talk with you. Why not, therefore, to-night?'

"Certainly, the man is mad, I thought. The most dangerous madman that ever was. Delay! Delay! How the devil could I delay him sufficiently to communicate with some of the medical faculty at Munich, and get a couple of alienists out here? I must humour him.

"'I appreciate your logic, of course,' I said. 'But you would personally oblige me by waiting until the morning.' As I uttered it, I was conscious of the grotesque feebleness of that remark. 'Really, I should like to take those mathematical demonstrations of yours to bed with me. I followed them, of course, but I am far from grasping fully the stupendous intellectual power necessary to have produced them. It has taken all these millions of years since man emerged from the anthropoid to develop this final culmination of his reasoning faculties in your uniquely constituted brain. He can afford to wait a little longer in his prison, while I have the

"Don't let him!" cried the girl, in an agony of terror. "If you ever loved me, Franz, don't let him!"

selfish pleasure of completely appreciating this *ne plus ultra* of intellectual attainment.'

"He shrugged his shoulders.

"'As you say, Massingford, a few hours more or less is of no importance. I was, indeed, intending to bring my work to an end this evening.' It gave me cold shudders to hear him. 'But certainly I should like to have your full appreciation. There's not another intellect in the world capable of grasping my achievement.'

"I managed to smile. 'You exaggerate my ability,' I said. 'Remember, I'm not infallible. There may be some flaw in your calculations I failed to detect. Why not bring along Delahaye from Paris or Bredow from Leipzig? In some respects, they're both better mathematicians than I am.' My heart thudded as I said it. If I could

only get a couple of colleagues here, the three of us might put him under restraint.

"He shook his head.

"'No. I have confidence enough in you. I've always had a certain amount of respect for your work. And I'm certainly not going to honour those two pretentious imbeciles with a glimpse of mine. It even amuses me to think that they will suddenly cease to exist without even an inkling of what is happening.'

"I tried again.

"'There's nothing in life you care for, then, Vandermost?'

"'I have achieved all I ever cared for. There is nothing more for me to do. There is nothing more for any other man to do. I have attained the ultimate of knowledge. I have solved the enigma. There's no further reason for the existence of humanity.'

"I smiled.

"'Those several hundreds of millions populating this globe would most certainly disagree with you,' I said. 'Absurd as it may be, they actually enjoy this endless struggle for existence of which they know not the why nor wherefore.'

"He shrugged his shoulders again.

"'Their enjoyment is entirely immaterial. Doubtless the hundreds of millions of typhoid germs are enjoying themselves when they kill a man.'

"The arrogant megalomania of the man was beyond all argument, the more so that undoubtedly he could logically prove he was right. If this world could vanish as if it had never been—as in any case it some day must—there was plainly no valid purpose in any of its creatures. But somehow, weakly, I ignored that logic. I thought of all those hundreds of millions of men, women, and children, swarming over the globe, toiling, fighting, cheating, having a good time, struggling in misery and despair, loving, betraying, performing all sorts of basenesses, performing all sorts of heroisms, and it seemed to me intolerable that all their existences could be summarily annihilated at the will of this man. Of one thing I was quite certain, that I had no desire to dissolve suddenly into an inchoate whirl of released energy.

"However, there was clearly nothing more to be said. There was no plane on which I could appeal to him. Love, pity, he was loftily above them all; had a convincing answer to every plea. Every human emotion was but a concomitant of the struggle for existence—a struggle not intrinsically more valid than that of the typhoid germs he had mentioned. He would have replied that he brought an immense deliverance to all those tortured organisms, that he was about to terminate the blind struggle, to liberate them from the tyrannous concatenation of matter eternally renewing its form. Now, at last, was an end of suffering—and the world would not even know it had ceased to suffer, so instantaneous would be its annihilation. It made my head dizzy to think of it, as I sat brooding in that silent library. I had to remind myself that there was, in fact, no discoverable flaw in his mathematical processes, no flaw in the apparatus he had devised. The thing was *certain*.

"He glanced at me, as I sat, sunk in that meditation. Perhaps I had shuddered.

"'I understand now why your intellectual development stopped short, Massingford,' he said, coolly. 'You allow yourself to be invaded by emotion.'

"Emotion! I almost shouted at him that I had a wife and daughters, while he only had a damned test-tube.

"'I don't suppose you ever loved anything in your life,' I said, as politely as possible. 'There are things that even you can't comprehend.'

"'I love old Wolf here,' he replied, fondling the animal. 'And I have never met a human being to compare with him for all the virtues. He would give his life for mine any day. As it is, we are both going to pass out cleanly together, instead of being eaten by worms. If I had a wife, which God forbid, I should feel the same way about it.'

"It was intolerable. I could stand no more of it. I felt that in another minute I should shriek outright, and fling myself at his throat. But emphatically, I had no desire to spend the rest of my days in a madhouse, for no jury in the world would accept my plea of justifiable homicide. The very arguments I adduced would be proof of my insanity. If I could only wreck his infernal laboratory! But probably he had it guarded by live electric wires, or something of the sort. I ventured a leading question, with a nonchalance that I fancied was a masterpiece of histrionic art.

"'I think I'll turn in with your papers, I said, casually. 'I work best at night and in bed. And I'll go through them thoroughly this time. I suppose there's no chance of burglars getting into your laboratory, and accidentally blowing us all up? That would be humiliating, in the circumstances.' I even laughed as I said it.

"He grinned at me. I was sure that he had read my thoughts.

"'There's not much chance of that. Old Wolf here sleeps on the threshold.'

"'That's comforting,' I said, picking up his scripts. 'Well—if you'll show me to my room, I'll say good night.'

"HE led me up to my room on the first floor, and left me. I found myself shaking all over. For a moment I wondered whether I was going mad, whether the hallucination of another lunatic had infected me also. Then I looked again at his accursed papers. It was no hallucination. It was cold, stark fact, *a* plus *b* equals *c*. I felt physically sick. This man wasn't God to dispose of the world in this off-hand way. It couldn't be—it mustn't be—allowed! But how the devil was I going to stop him? Thank Heavens, I had at least secured a respite. If I hadn't had that happy thought about going through his papers again, he'd have pulled that switch ere this.

"I sat there a long time, shivering and shuddering on my bed. It must have been very late when I heard a furtive whispering outside, a stealthy struggle.

"'No—no—Hugo. Don't! Let me go!'

"It was Kätchen—Kätchen, with Breidenbach doubtless trying to steal a kiss. Well, let him! What did it matter? What did a stolen kiss more or less matter when this

time to-morrow—there mightn't be *any time*—nothing but a void in the cosmos——?

"Sheer terror—ridiculous, illogical terror—overcame me. If only, somehow, I could make an end of Vandermost before he ended everything—before he summarily dismissed into nothingness this incomprehensible æon-old drama of existence sanctified by the blood and tears and heroisms of incomputible myriads of human beings! Supposing I told Kätchen that by this time to-morrow her master would have ended her and her flirtations for ever? It was a diabolic temptation. I could imagine her running at him with a knife, in a primitive madness of despair, taking upon herself the calvary I was trying to dodge. No. I couldn't do it. If anyone made an end of Vandermost, it must be myself alone. I alone *knew*. Again I shuddered.

"The whispering continued. I listened. In that dead silence of the night, I could hear quite plainly. Evidently Breidenbach was becoming pressing, and apparently his own quarters were dangerous. I presumed that Schmidt occupied others close to them. The girl perhaps shared a room with the old housekeeper. I got oddly interested in this vulgar, commonplace intrigue, so ardently pursued in blissful ignorance of impending universal destruction. 'No—no—Hugo!' I could hear the girl repeating. 'Let me go—it's impossible.'

"Then Breidenbach had a brain-wave. 'The laboratory!' he whispered. 'No one will look for us there. No one ever goes there at night!'

"The girl, evidently, was still reluctant, was frightened. 'But, Hugo,' she whispered, 'the dog—that huge dog.'

"That huge Alsatian was certainly something to be frightened of. But Breidenbach laughed softly. 'The dog's all right,' he said. 'He knows me. I've often been in the laboratory at night before.'

"Still the girl was reluctant. 'No,' she said. 'No. I'm afraid—I'm afraid of Franz—if he found out——'

"Breidenbach laughed again. 'He certainly won't come and find us in the laboratory,' he said. 'He's far too scared of Wolf.'

"Then they whispered in an earnest colloquy, too low-voiced for me to catch it. It was absurd that I should be thus keenly interested in their surreptitious little love-affair, this last little romance snatched on the brink of universal doom. But I was. I strained to catch what they said, crept close to the door. As I arrived there, evidently Breidenbach had succeeded in persuading her. They moved off together down the passage. I gently opened the door an inch, peered after them. Yes. They were going, arms about each other, to the staircase, presumably to the laboratory, where they might kiss without likelihood of interference. Good luck to them, I thought, in an immense illogical pity, for, after all, my own case was as desperate as theirs.

"AS I watched them disappear, I suddenly saw another form pass my door, in swift and silent pursuit. My heart jumped. It was Schmidt! He was so intent on following them that he did not notice my door ajar. In his hand he had an automatic pistol. I perceived it with a shock. Was murder to be added to this fantastic night? Murder—when to-morrow——?

"Schmidt also disappeared from view, down the stairs. What does A do now? I said to myself. Immaterial though I knew that murder to be, in any larger sense, yet, after all, it was my social duty to prevent it if I could. Those social duties might as well be normally performed until the moment of annihilation. I owed it to some sort of human dignity, rebellious in me. Vandermost hadn't yet had the last word. I thought all this, even while automatically, instinctively, I found myself following Schmidt. Lucky I hadn't undressed, I remember thinking. One gets a deal of moral courage out of being properly clad in a moment of crisis.

"Down the stairs went Schmidt, and down the stairs I went after him, as silently as I could. Anyway, he did not hear me. He went quickly along the passage towards the laboratory, and I after him. There was no sign of Breidenbach and Kätchen. They were well ahead, evidently. Suddenly I remembered that confounded dog. I hadn't the slightest desire to have my throat torn out by an Alsatian. In a spasm of complete cowardice, I stopped short. Let me see first how Schmidt managed to pass the brute.

"I stood there and listened. I wondered what Vandermost would say or do, if he were aware of this little drama, the life-force still blindly playing its part up to the very moment when it should please him to decree its annihilation. Everything was eerily silent. Certainly, Breidenbach and Kätchen must already have passed the dog. At any moment I might hear his snarl of rage as he flung himself at Schmidt. No. There was nothing. I took courage again, and crept on.

"The laboratory door was open. There was a bright light inside. What was happening? I could hear voices. I ran along the corridor, entered that big room crowded with scientific instruments of all kinds.

"I was astonished to see Vandermost

standing by *the* piece of apparatus, Breidenbach and Kätchen close together near him, and Schmidt at a little distance. The Alsatian had flopped down at his master's feet.

"Vandermost looked round and perceived me.

"'Ah!' he said, with a sardonic smile, 'this saves me the trouble of sending for you, Massingford. I felt sure you would like to be present at the supreme moment. I couldn't sleep to-night, and I saw no reason for subjecting myself to the tortures of insomnia when, as in this case, they are so simply avoidable. I have just been explaining to Breidenbach and Kätchen here that when I pull this switch, the world will suddenly cease to exist, and they with it. It is hardly what they came here for. Apparently they thought it just the spot for a little flirtation. It is hardly what Schmidt came here for either. He was recklessly about to murder one or both of them. Now,' he smiled again, 'I am going to save him that trouble. I'm afraid he doesn't really believe me, Massingford. And I should not like him to pass out in a spasm of incredulity. After all, he has been a loyal assistant, and is not without some glimmering of science. Perhaps you could convince him that it will happen precisely as I say?'

"'He's mad!' said Schmidt, and I saw that perspiration was pouring down the blond giant's face. 'He's quite mad!—and as for these two——' He raised his pistol, and Kätchen shrieked and shrank.

"'No!' I cried. 'Don't—for God's sake! Vandermost is certainly mad—but certainly it is true what he says! If he pulls that switch—he will detonate the atomic structure of the world—annihilate it—annihilate us all! It's gospel truth—I vouch for it——!'

"Vandermost seemed to be enjoying his assistant's bewilderment.

"The blond Teuton stared at me, a horror in his face, still half incredulous. And then the girl sprang at him with another shriek. '*Ach!* Don't let him, Franz! Don't let him! If you love me—don't let him!'

"Schmidt looked to me with the girl clinging to him.

"'It's really true?' he asked, incredulously. 'It's really true, Herr Massingford? He can do that——?'

"'Don't let him!' cried the girl, in an agony of terror. 'If you ever loved me, Franz—don't let him!'

"'It's absolute truth I tell you!' I said. 'If he pulls that switch there's an end of Kätchen and all of us!'

"God forgive me, it was a diabolic thing to say, but I said it. Schmidt was the only man with a weapon.

"Even as I spoke, he jerked it up with a cry. 'Never!' There was a deafening report, and Vandermost pitched headlong.

"The next moment, the Alsatian had leaped at Schmidt, had borne him to the floor. I got at the automatic and shot the brute. But Franz was dead, Kätchen sobbing over him uncontrollably. Perhaps it was just as well. It saved a murder trial, and much unpleasant publicity.

"A QUEER business, eh?—and an ironic finale. There was indeed more than an irony in it. That vulgar little intrigue of love and murderous jealousy blindly kept the old world going on in the good old-fashioned way. Trust the life-force. Still, as I said, some credit—or the reverse—is due to me that the Alps are still there for you to sentimentalize over."

"H'm!" I said, after a pause. "An odd story. I take your word for it. But it makes me feel a little uncomfortable. How do I know that at this moment some other insane genius is not trying to explode the atom?"

Massingford smiled.

"It's hardly likely, I think," he said. "I personally most thoroughly destroyed Vandermost's papers. And Breidenbach and I together dismantled his apparatus, and carried the component parts up the mountain and dropped them down a chasm. It will probably be some hundreds of years before another genius like Vandermost comes along. Don't worry. The world will see you out."

CUPID AND CLASS WARFARE

CUPID, of course, saw to it that Lady Joan Mendip, coming unexpectedly into her bedroom, caught Brittle, her maid and friend, red-eyed, limp, and decanting tears upon a camisole——!

Now Joan happened to be a masterful young woman, immune from any form of sentimentality, and blessed with ample independent means and mind. The two, so she suggested, were correlated. She had inherited from her mother, the only child of a New York banker, many dollars; she had also inherited transpontine opinions and judgments concerning liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Independence of mind, so she said, had prevented her from entering Parliament. She couldn't see eye to eye with Conservatives, or Liberals, or Socialists; but her sympathies lay with the under dog. Lord Cheddar, her father, predicted that his daughter—if she didn't marry—would become a champion of lost causes. Meanwhile Joan lived with him, loved him, and did more or less exactly what she pleased with him.

Joan was writing breezy articles for the *Sunday Banner* in defence of domestic service when she met Eve Brittle, who at the time was being over-worked and underpaid in the International Emporium in Melchester. Eve had been in service, and Joan lured her back to service. Eve was most grateful, and intelligent enough to appreciate an illuminating change for the better in health, appearance, and general comfort.

"Why," asked Joan, kindly enough, "are you dampening nice dry clothes just back from the wash?"

"Oh-h-h! I'm so unhappy, my lady."

"Sit down! Have a cigarette. Tell me everything. Has anybody been beastly to you in this house?"

"N-n-no."

Finally the truth leaked from a very pretty pair of lips. Eve's "boy," Cuthbert Pilley, the big son of a Melchester butcher, had "dropped" Eve because, having gone back to service, she was now "no class."

Joan dissembled her fury, as she observed:—

"Young Pilley is not the only rooster in your barn-yard?"

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by BOWMAR

" Really and truly he is, my lady."

" You mean you *want* him back ? " Eve nodded. " Good ! I'll take a hand in this."

" Bert thinks the world of you, my lady."

" Does he ? I shall have a word first with my father. This hateful affair is personal to *us*. I think I can promise you this : if you do want Cuthbert back, you shall have him. Have you done anything, you poor little dear, on your own ? "

What Eve had done provoked a smile. Young Pilley, it appeared, not content with " dropping " Eve, had " taken on " Miss Amy Hayball, another young lady working in the same emporium where Eve had been so overworked. Eve admitted that she had avenged herself (partially) by marching up to Miss Hayball's counter (she sold " vanity bags "), picking over the wares, finding fault, giving all the trouble she could, and finally—the Parthian shot—announcing her intention of stepping across to a rival establishment where she hoped to find better attention and less out-of-date goods——!

Father and daughter laughed over this at tea-time, although they agreed that the real offender had escaped scot-free. Joan summed up the situation :—

" Extremes meet. We don't care a hoot about these absurd class distinctions ; nor do our labourers. The trouble lies with the *bourgeoisie*."

" Yes, Joan, yes. It irritates me that our cook, whom I regard as a most intelligent woman and a benefactress to us and all who dine with us, is not considered worthy to be asked to drink tea with young Pilley's mother."

" Well, Pop, enlightenment must come, as always, from above. These tradespeople ought to be shown up as snobs. If Thackeray had lived to write about them —— ! "

" How do you propose to cope with young Pilley ? "

Joan caressed her firm little chin with a slim finger.

" Old Pilley's weekly bill is colossal——"

" If we get down to brass tacks, child, this is none of our business."

Joan smiled, jumped up, sat upon the arm of her father's chair, ruffled his thinning locks, and said with finality :—

" It is *my* business. I coaxed Brittle to leave that slave factory. If I'd left her alone, young Pilley would have rescued her."

Lord Cheddar said querulously :—

" I must remember that you are only half English."

" That's your fault, blessedest. I fight the English half of me tooth and talon . . . But what do you mean ? "

" Certain things simply can't be done. You, being you, *can't* set about young Pilley. You *can't* blackmail——"

" What ? "

" I—I gathered that you intended to threaten to take away our custom from old Pilley if young Pilley refused to toe your line."

" Pop ! You wicked old man ! That, if you like, would be dyed-in-the-wool English tyranny. Liberty, let me tell you, does not enlighten the world in that prehistoric way. I merely observed that our butcher's bill is too big. Inasmuch as I have called old Pilley Barabbas to his face, I don't mind saying behind his back that he is the thief of opportunity. Don't look as if I were talking Chocktaw. I'm not throwing stones at old Pilley. He has to do what others do ; he has rather a lick-spittle awe of you "— she laughed, and kissed his forehead. " He kowtows to me, which I loathe ; he is obsequious to those above and too disdainful of those below. And what applies to him applies to nearly every tradesman in the town. But old Pilley is a sportsman. I could talk him over easily. To ' get at ' young Pilley is going to tax my resource and initiative."

" You can't ' get at ' him, child."

" Yes ; I can, and the sooner the better."

II.

IF we could envisage Opportunity as one of the fateful sisters, it might be affirmed that the jade takes feminine delight in presenting herself unexpectedly. Upon the next day, a Saturday, Joan, driving her car, passed a delivery van standing at the door of a cottage. Joan had a glimpse of young Pilley delivering the Sunday beef. Immediately she accelerated. Five minutes later she was tinkering with the ignition with a smile on her face.

Young Pilley approached, beheld Joan, pulled up, jumped out of his van, and asked politely if he could be of any service.

" Yes," said Joan, beaming at him. " You can drive me home. You have something for us, I suppose ? "

" Yes, my lady."

" You can drop me at the Court, pick up my chauffeur and connect him with my bus. Something is wrong with the magneto."

" Very happy to oblige, I'm sure, my lady."

Joan thanked him sweetly. Cuthbert grinned, as they sat side by side for all the world and his wife to see. Perhaps he was sensible that Joan's blue eyes had not failed to notice his upstanding figure and handsome head. Indeed, at the moment she was thinking that Eve was justified in

Young Pilley approached, and asked politely if he could be of any service.

wanting back such a presentable lover, despite the fact that he had behaved shamelessly. Joan thought: "Young Pilley is pleased with himself; of course he thinks that he can pick and choose; I daresay Eve is too good for him; I must find out what manner of man he is."

This was easy. Eve had confided to Joan that Cuthbert was a "lovely" dancer. Accordingly, she began, gaily :—

"I hope you are going to this ball at the People's Pavilion in aid of the new hospital. I say that everybody who can buy a ticket *ought* to go."

"I read what you wrote about that, my lady."

"Did you?"

"I read your articles in the *Sunday Banner*."

"Fine! Now, Mr. Pilley, as between man and woman, what do you think of 'em? Let's have an honest opinion."

"I'm a Rotarian, my lady."

"Splendid! Service to all is your slogan. Go a bit slower, unless you're in a desperate hurry. Perhaps I ought not to talk to the man at the wheel."

Cuthbert slowed up, driving very carefully. A farmer, jogging along on a stout cob, had just passed, agape at what he saw. Hastily he had removed his hat.

"I believe," said Joan, with conviction, "that poor old Mr. Ozzard suffers from blood pressure. Really, he looked to me as if he were going to have a fit."

To allay anxieties, Cuthbert spoke up and out, brave as Horatius :—

"It was seeing *you* with *me*, my lady."

"What tosh!"

"It is a very great honour for me."

"We must shiver a lance over this, Mr. Pilley. I suppose you know that I'm half-American?"

"Yes, my lady, but——"

"Well?"

"I thought that the family didn't like it mentioned."

Joan laughed scornfully.

"Suffering snails! I'm proud of my American blood. My grandfather was a famous banker. His father was in the butcher business."

"In the butcher business?" repeated Cuthbert.

"One of the Chicago packers, a big man, but not too big for his boots. Now, perhaps, you understand why it seems to me preposterous that old Mr. Ozzard should be surprised because you have been kind enough to give me a lift. Explain to me, if you can, his psychology."

"I know my place, my lady."

'I'm bothered if I know mine. Do you vote Conservative?"

"Father would kick me out of the business if I didn't."

Joan cooed at him :—

"But, Mr. Pilley, if I stood for this division as a Labourite, and if I asked you to vote for me, would you have the heart to refuse?"

Cuthbert blushed.

Joan, noting his confusion, cooed on :—

"You say you have read my articles. I'm not a Socialist. Being half American, I'm an Individualist. But I am tremendously in sympathy with Labour; I want to raise the standard of living, but that can't be done yet awhile, because Labour is incapable of thinking simply about very simple things. Manual labour underrates intelligence—and *vice-versa*. There will be no real coming together of labour and capital, heaven-born twins, till class distinctions are scrapped."

"I agree with every word you say, my lady," said Cuthbert, with feeling.

"I'm so pleased to hear you say so. We must have more talk about this at the ball."

"At the ball?"

"Aren't you going to ask me to dance?"

"You will be bringing your party. I shouldn't have the impudence to butt in on that."

"I shall be most offended if you don't. Here we are at the lodge. Drive me to the front door."

At the front door, in the presence of an archi-episcopal butler and a footman, Joan shook hands with Mr. Pilley. Then she dispatched the footman for her chauffeur, and—to save time—instructed the butler to take the—*meat*. An old retainer reeled when he heard Joan asking the butcher's son if she could offer him a whisky-and-soda. Cuthbert stammered out :—

"N-n-no thank you, m-m-my l-lady."

III.

NEEDLESS to say, Eve heard of this; and she may have listened to comments made by butler and housekeeper. However, being a grateful creature, she said to Joan that same evening :—

"It is sweet of you, my lady, to do this for me. But they say—in the room——"

She paused.

"What do they say?" asked Joan.

"Something very silly."

"Let's have it."

"Well, Mr. Smithers told Mrs. Cawl that you'd fair turned Cuthbert's head——"

"Oh-h-h! You think that silly?"

"I do know," said Eve, humbly but acidly, "that his head *is* easily turned."

Joan surveyed her calmly.

"I can understand your *wanting* young Pilley, Brittle."

"Thank you, my lady."

"Not so much 'my lady.' I—I mean, we're just two young women putting their heads together with a definite object in view. This is my plan of campaign. We are all going to this ball. I've invited Captain Darell, and I shall tell him to pay attention to you, to dance with you several times——"

Eve looked pleased.

"I," continued Joan, "shall take the floor, more than once, I hope, with young Pilley."

Eve giggled, but her alert little brains were busy.

"It seems to me——"

"Yes?"

"That it would make Cuthbert hotter in the collar if Captain Darell gave me a miss and clicked, so to speak, with Amy."

"Amy?"

"Miss Hayball, the young lady at the vanity bags counter."

"That's a brain-wave. Two heads are better than one. But we're up against

Joan went straight to an adjoining glove counter, leaving Captain Darell to carry out his instructions.

a snag. I don't know this girl. It's quite in order for Captain Darell to ask you to dance, but Amy might refuse to dance with a strange young man."

"Not she."

"Well, we must do our little damndest, and hope for the best."

"Ye-es."

IV.

THE Hospital Ball took place on a Thursday. On Wednesday afternoon, Joan and Captain Darell entered the big shop where Miss Hayball sold vanity bags. Joan went straight to an adjoining glove counter, leaving Captain Darell to carry out his instructions.

"The girl has reddish hair, a pert nose, and is unmistakably self-conscious, because she has won a beauty prize. I shall take my time at the glove counter. Meanwhile, you will buy a bag. Amy will love to help you choose it. You can hint, if you like, that it is for me. She knows me by sight. You can say that you are staying with us for the ball."

"I'm wise, Joan. I shall find out next if she's going, and ask for a dance——"

"Bah! How men rush things! I want you to arouse, not to satisfy expectation. I want Amy to enjoy the pleasures of anticipation. It is vital that she should have you constantly in mind for the next twenty-four hours, wondering whether or not you *will* ask her to dance."

"Right!"

"After you have bought the bag, give her your name and tell her to send it to the Court. Don't give her the glad eye!"

"Why not?"

"Because a frock-coated gentleman will have *his* eye on both of you. Treat her with—with, yes—with distinguished courtesy. She may ask you if you are *the* Captain Darell."

"I hope she won't."

"I hope she will. She may tell you that she has seen your face in the picture papers. Be prepared for that. You have to get it across that you're a perfect gentleman, a bit of a dasher, and an iconoclast——"

"Say that again."

"A breaker of idols, the idols of the market-place. Class distinctions, for instance, are anathema to you——"

"They are."

"Observe quietly that you never saw so many pretty girls in one shop before. As she is admittedly the pick of the basket, she will accept that as intimately and reassuringly personal to herself——"

"You're a marvel, Joan!"

"I'm just wondering whether it would be good biz to put the lid on all this by——"

"Yes?"

"By asking Amy to point out to you which of the young ladies won the Beauty Prize?"

"That unquestionably must be done."

"Do it—discreetly."

It was done.

V.

JOAN was a Lady Patroness of the ball; and Joan suggested that the exercises should begin with The Fascination Polka. This is a class-shattering dance, devised to put gentle and simple at ease with each other. You take partners, as usual. The band strikes up a gay, jigging polka. Suddenly the music stops. You change partners, taking the nearest maid or man. On with the dance——! Halt—and change again, *and again*.

Joan made sure that young Pilley would take the floor with Amy. Dick Darell, booked by Joan, had further instructions. He was enjoined to "shadow" Cuthbert. The moment the music stopped, Dick would grab Amy; and Cuthbert, willy-nilly, would have to claim Joan.

Eve helped to dress Joan; and then Joan arrayed Eve in one of her own frocks.

"A present for a good girl," observed Joan.

"Oh, thank you, my lady. I—I don't feel very extra good to-night."

"You will before the night's out. I want young Pilley to look at you, but you mustn't on any account look at him. Try to kid yourself that he isn't there. If things go right, Captain Darell will ask you for a two-step after supper. Keep all your after-supper dances."

"As I haven't a boy," said Eve, miserably, "I shall be lucky if I get anybody."

"You must look happy, full of cheer and beans. I think it likely that after your dance with Captain Darell, you may be approached by Cuthbert."

"It makes me come all over queer to think of that."

"Smile serenely at him. If he asks how you are, tell him that at long last you have found true happiness——"

"My lady——! I might be struck dead."

"Risk that."

"Cuthbert will want to know what I mean?"

"Go on smiling and say nothing."

"But he loves girls to be snappy."

"Tell him you are too happy to be snappy."

"Then he'll up and leave me."

"No, he won't. The besetting sin of youth is curiosity. I'm sure that Cuthbert was too sure of you."

"Maybe he was."

"He's in for a guessing competition to-night."

"So am I," sighed Eve.

VI.

BEFORE the last strains of the Fascination Polka died away, much had been accomplished. Captain Darell had danced with Amy; Joan had danced with Cuthbert. A short duologue between Cuthbert and Amy will serve as a straw to indicate the current of events. Both man and maid were pleasurably excited and conscious of "uplift." Cuthbert, however, was not perfectly easy in his mind. Joan had told him that Amy was dancing with the famous aviator, an excess-speed celebrity, an "ace." But she had pretended not to know Amy. Now Dick, acting under further instructions from Joan, had kept the letter whilst disobeying the spirit of the dance. He had grabbed Amy masterfully when the band stopped playing for the first time. When it stopped for the second time, he had released her, and then re-grabbed her with a jolly laugh. Cuthbert had seen this manœuvre. Before he had time to think about it, he too was grabbed by a stout damsel who, when the music stopped again, refused to let him go——!

In fine, Cuthbert was not at his best when he rejoined Amy. She, so he noted, wore an ecstatic expression.

"Why, Bert, how hot you look!"

"I've been hauling round a stall-fed prize heifer. What price aviators?"

"Pardon?"

"What price Captain Richard Darell, D.S.O., M.C., et cetery, et cetery . . ."

"Bert," murmured Miss Hayball, "the captain is too lovely for anything, and such a gentleman. But I knew that when we first met."

"You have met before? Where? *When*, may I ask?"

"He bought a vanity bag from me yesterday. I recognized his voice, 'cos I'd heard him speak on the wireless; and then I recognized his face——"

"And then he asked you to dance——"

"Nothing of the sort. Still——"

"Step on it!"

"Well, Bert, I have a notion that he kept close to us when I was dancing with you, and some way I was in his arms in two two's when you let go. I—I don't think it was altogether accidental-like."

"Has this lovely man asked you to dance with him again? He has, has he? No complaints! Not one——"

"You're talking and acting very queer, Bert."

"Not at all. It comes to this, Amy: If you are dead set on dancing again, *and perhaps again*, out of your class, you can't have any kick coming, if I do the same."

"I shall love to see you enjoying yourself, Bert. All said and done that's what the ball is for?"

"Eh?"

"To bring us all together for charity's sake. Charity means love."

"Rightie O!"

"It's a sort of night off, Bert, if you know what I mean?"

"I don't, but that's of no consequence. Toot-a-loo!"

"Toot-a-loo!" repeated Amy.

VII.

MEANWHILE, poor Eve was what children call "watching on." She beheld, with bitter-sweet emotions, two couples having—so she reflected—altogether too good a time. To make matters worse young men whom she had known and danced with when she worked at the emporium gave her a cool nod of greeting and a "miss." She had broken the unwritten law. She had reverted to type. Miserably she realized that she had burnt her boats. She, as a shop assistant, had "turned down" under-gardeners, young footmen, and the like. Now they, in their turn, left her to play wallflower. She danced twice with the portly Mr. Smithers, and once with each of the footmen—perfunctory courtesy dances.

Out of the corner of her eye she watched Cuthbert and Amy and wondered whether there could be any secret understanding between them. Had they agreed for this night only not to dance with each other? Now and again Joan flashed a smile at her; now and again Captain Darell seemed to be eyeing her with interest. Her great moment came when just before supper he asked her to dance.

He took her in to supper!

For at least a fortnight after the ball, the gossips of Melchester discussed, some with acrimony, what took place at supper. It had been suggested by a lady of quality that the county people should sup together. Joan had opposed this. Finally it was decided that the five-shilling tickets included admittance only. Supper, whether at small tables or at a buffet, would be paid for extra. The same applied to liquid refreshments. You could drink what you liked from light lager to champagne. When the Lord-Lieutenant of Melshire placed the seal of his approval upon this go-as-you-please and democratic arrangement, nearly everybody applauded. And so it came to pass that at a table set for four Lord Cheddar and Cuthbert Pilley supped with Mrs. Pilley, Cuthbert's mother, and Lady Joan Mendip.

"Who," asked Eve, "is that red-headed girl. Her face seems familiar!"

At a table built for two Captain Darell and Miss Eve Brittle drank champagne!

The supper was a tremendous success. Town and county came together in a truly Christian spirit. Acting under Joan's instructions, Lord Cheddar said a few significant words to Mrs. Pilley. They need not be repeated, although Mrs. Pilley repeated them everywhere, declaring that it was wicked to look down upon any fellow creature, adding that it was much easier to look *up* to a great nobleman when he, bless him! made it plain to the meanest intelligence that brains outranked mere birth, and that kind hearts were more than coronets.

Bert, listening to his lordship, allowed his glance to rest upon Eve. Why had the Captain picked her out? Why had he taken her in to supper? And where, oh, where, was Amy? After his second glass

of champagne, Bert decided to speak to Eve.

At this moment, he heard Joan's voice.

"You are looking at my dear little maid, Mr. Pilley. Isn't she a perfect darling? Captain Darell begged me to present him to her; but I'm so afraid that she hasn't had too good a time. If I introduce you to her, will you give her a dance? You dance beautifully—and so does she."

"I—I have met Miss Brittle, my lady."

"Really! Do be nice to her to—to please me."

Mrs. Pilley replied for her son.

"Of course he will, my lady, won't you, Bert?" Bert nodded, as Mrs. Pilley continued: "She is looking sweetly pretty."

"I am proud to call her my friend, Mrs. Pilley."

"You hear what her ladyship says, Bert. Suppose you step across and ask Miss Brittle to give you *two* dances."

"I—I will," said Bert.

VIII.

AS Bert, crimson of countenance, approached Eve, Captain Darell, anticipating a signal, saw that Joan was sniffing at a tiny handkerchief. He jumped up, offering his chair to Bert, saying pleasantly:—

"I think Lady Joan wishes to speak to me."

Bert dropped heavily into the chair. Eve smiled at him.

"Good evening, Mr. Pilley——"

"*Good* evening, Miss Brittle——"

"One might really almost say—a heavenly evening."

"Yes," assented Bert, "quite a nice sociable affair, merry and bright. May I have the honour of the next dance?"

"Not the next, Mr. Pilley."

"You are—engaged?"

"No, but I'm so happy sitting here. This has been such a wonderful experience——"

"Of what, may I ask?"

"Oh! Of human nature, for one thing. So funny and amusing! For me it was like looking on at a show. And then his lordship came and sat beside me, and talked to me. And then Captain Darell asked me to go into supper. And it's all like a dream. I—I can't believe that I'm really awake. Did you feel that way when you were dancing with her ladyship?"

Cuthbert blinked at her.

She smiled back, even as Lady Joan had smiled—*encouragingly*. Her smile seemed to say: "You are a very young, inexperienced man, with an awful lot to learn, but, as young men come and go, you might be worse." At the same moment he espied Amy leaving the supper room escorted by the son and partner of a prosperous undertaker. She, too, seemed to be radiating mirth and happiness.

"Who," asked Eve, "is that red-haired girl with Mr. Ernest Hudd? Her face seems familiar——"

"That is Miss Hayball, one of the young ladies in the International Emporium."

"Oh, dear! I'm ever so sorry to hear that——"

"Pardon?"

"She's a white slave, isn't she? I've been there—and I know. Wouldn't it be lovely if Mr. Hudd took a shine to her? He's in such a snug business——"

"Snug——?"

"Oh, well—you know. In bad times one can wriggle along without butchers' meat, but we must have coffins. Mr. Hudd is a very small man. Perhaps Miss Haycock fancies them undersized? "

"Hayball," growled Cuthbert, more and more perplexed by Eve's manner. "I—I brought Miss Hayball here."

"But—I haven't seen you dancing with her. She has danced three times with Captain Darell."

"All the same, he took *you* in to supper."

Eve's smile was guileless, as she murmured, shyly:—

"Ye—es."

Cuthbert began to talk rather thickly, leaning forward across the table. Under the table his foot touched another foot, not his own, which was immediately withdrawn.

"Perhaps I ought to go back to my supper partner?"

"You know best about that, Mr. Pilley. If you asked me——"

"I do."

"Please look at them."

Cuthbert turned and looked. Lord Cheddar and Mrs. Pilley had returned to the ballroom. Dick and Joan were apparently deep in confidential talk.

"That's a case, I think," said Eve.

"You say that as if you knew."

"I'm sure he's crazy mad for her; but she's so rich and he's so poor."

"That," affirmed Mr. Pilley, speaking as if he were the twin brother of Lady Joan Mendip, "would cut no ice with her. She scorns such snobbery. And—and so do I."

"I quite understand," murmured Eve.

Mr. Pilley leaned nearer, as he whispered: "Are you sure that you do?"

"Oh, yes. I'm sure that you, in your position, the son of an alderman, and certain to be Mayor of Melchester one day, would not hesitate to offer your hand and heart to—Miss Haycock."

There was a pause. Cuthbert gulped down some champagne left in the Captain's glass. He attempted to catch and hold a pair of eyes which seemed to be gazing into illimitable space.

"Evie——"

"Yes, Bert?"

"Will you dance with me every dance till you have to leave?"

"You mean that?" she sighed.

"*I—I mean more than that,*" he replied, handsomely.

Simultaneously, they laughed.

IX.

JOHN laughed, too, as the pair left the supper-room.

"That's that, Dick," she chuckled.

"I congratulate you, Joan. You deserve the D.S.O."

"Thanks. The Domestic Service Order. But I lose a dear little maid."

"You are not dependent on any maid?"

"I am not."

He lowered his voice.

"Tell me—are you dependent on *anybody?*"

She remained silent. For five minutes, at least, expecting climax or anti-climax, she had been talking to Dick about ridiculous class distinctions; she had insisted on justifying what she had done, and he—not being a fool—had wondered whether she was prepared to practise what she preached, and more, whether what she preached so gaily had underlying significance for him.

She ignored his question, but he was sure she had heard it.

"I told little Eve to keep the after-supper dances," said Joan, rising as she spoke.

Her eyes were twinkling.

"You didn't answer my question, Joan."

"You will go too fast at your fences. I—I shall answer it, *perhaps*, later on."

Cupid heard and chuckled.

THE LARGEST ZOO IN THE WORLD

THERE is a road running over the upper levels of the Dunstable Downs, in Bedfordshire, which goes by the name of Cut Throat Avenue. On each side is a broad expanse of meadow, yellow in the summer with buttercups, with a background of high trees.

Four heavy cart horses, just released from a day's work, were being led along this road, and as they shambled past Dagnall Paddock a young horse, grazing there, caught sight of them, kicked up his heels excitedly, and galloped towards them at top speed. Headed back by a light fence of wire netting, he trotted alongside and galloped off, swerving across the field with head lowered and tail waving. His antics were watched with stolid disapproval by a large, horned, white beast —rather bigger, surely, than an ordinary cow—which stood stiffly in the middle of the meadow. It was in Whipsnade Park.

On coming nearer I found that this lively young animal was a Mongolian Wild Horse, and that his morose neighbour was not an ordinary cow, but a distinctly bigger creature—long, shaggy, humped. In fact, a Tibetan Yak. And in the same paddock were two other yaks, smaller and darker, and three or four big asses quietly cropping the grass—Tibetan Asses, as it turned out, or Kiangs. The whole scene was under cynical observation by a pair of contemplative eyes

By

R.A.SCOTT-JAMES

from a small field in the rear. Their owner, bored, turned his back and walked sedately into his private house. He was an Arabian camel, a strange fellow to meet among the Chiltern Hills.

But we expect strange things in Whipsnade Zoo, where so many outlandish settlers have been assembled. And others are on their way. It is, in fact, a young colony planted in the middle of rural England, where immigrants from all parts of the world —assisted, of course, in their migration— are invited to make a new home—animals and birds from Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and the Polar regions.

It was an inspiration on the part of the Zoological Society of London to choose Whipsnade. Five years ago the five hundred acres, which were destined to become the Zoological Park, were rough farmland, most of it on the roof of the Downs, from six hundred to over seven hundred feet above sea level. Its western extremity sloped steeply down to the rolling plain where Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Buckinghamshire meet. It had woods, hedged fields, and open downland, an old brick farmhouse with cowsheds and outbuildings, two or three labourers' cottages, a duck-pond, and another pond where at one time sheep and pack-horses used to be watered.

It had many varieties of trees. It was a nesting-place for birds. It was rich in wild flowers. And it afforded vast, scarcely surpassable panoramic views of the gentlest breadths and depths of rural England—the eye crossing a valley of meadows and trees in the west, meeting the bold features of Ivinghoe Beacon two and a half miles away, and travelling beyond it across the plain of Aylesbury towards Oxford and Boar's Hill, or northwards over the undulating Midlands till it loses itself in the blue mists of the horizon. It is one of the noblest views in England that dazzles the visitor who comes suddenly from the woods on to the wild, open slope of Bison Hill. The nearest highways are two ancient Roman roads which have their junction at Dunstable—the Icknield Way, which crosses the plain below to the north-west of Whipsnade, and Watling Street two miles to the east. From time immemorial Whipsnade was the home of English wild animals, birds, and flowers. The Zoological Society decided to protect them in their retreat, and they were to share it with beasts and birds from foreign countries. It was a wild place, and it was to

Photo: D. Seth-Smith.

American bison enjoying their freedom on Bison Hill. From this spot one of the most glorious views in England is to be obtained.

A strange animal to find ranging the Chiltern downland—a camel in his enclosure at Whipsnade.

remain so, though with a wildness studiously preserved.

It was to be the biggest zoo that had ever been made, for the Yellowstone Park in America is not a zoo. It is a reservation for wild life that is native to the area. In the Yellowstone Park there are no elephants, lions, tigers, ostriches, camels, emus, wallabies, and all the other varieties which are to be found in real zoos, such as those in London, Berlin, and New York. But fifteen Regent's Park Zoos could be packed into the area of Whipsnade. It is nearly twice the size of the Bronx Park Zoological Gardens at New York, which, with their two hundred and seventy acres, were hitherto reputed to be the largest in the world.

Whipsnade, then, as it was conceived five years ago, was to be an experiment, a piece of pioneer work, benefiting, indeed, by all the experience which German, American, French, Dutch, Australian and other famous zoos could afford, but in its essence a new thing in the zoological world. The place was half wild to start with, and it was to keep much of its wildness. The animals were to live under conditions where they would be as free as possible, yet cared for. It would be a testing-ground for discovering how far tropical or Arctic animals could acclimatize themselves to English air seven hundred feet above sea level. It would be a country home to which inhabitants of the London Zoo, cramped in their Town lodgings, or run down by too much city life, could withdraw for a change of air and scene. Above all, it would be a breeding-place. Animals and birds were to go into it two by two, as they went into the Ark, and to have every opportunity of mating. Whipsnade was to be an hotel, a nursery, a hospital, a stud farm and a recreation ground.

Needless to say, it did not spring up ready-made with the suddenness of a country fair. During the four years in which it was in preparation it was a sort of "hush-hush" place. As little as possible was said of it. Intruding visitors and reporters were discouraged. One or two crossed its boundaries, and came back with mystery tales.

So, obviously, a first necessity was a boundary fence—a wire fence four and a half miles long, strong enough and high enough to keep the animals in and the intruders out. Roads had to be made, one starting from the present main gate by which a sort of circular tour of the whole area can

be made, and another crossing the wooded northern section from east to west. Large pits had to be dug deep into the chalky subsoil on the edge of the Down—the future homes of lions and tigers. One hundred and fifty unemployed men, mostly miners, were drafted to Whipsnade by the Ministry of Labour and set to work. The only available water was at Ouseley Pond, chiefly frequented by frogs and toads, and another—a duck-pond by the farmhouse. So a deep well had to be sunk, a reservoir built, and an electric pumping plant installed so that water for drinking and bathing could be conducted to all parts of the Park. Nor was it forgotten that Whipsnade may be very cold in the winter, and some of the animals may be delicate ; so electricity had to be brought six miles from Luton to provide electric heating for the shelters of the more sensitive animals.

Many miles of wire netting had to be set up to separate the main areas one from another, and to keep the wilder animals away from the public. Shelters, also, had to be constructed into which they could withdraw when they wished to do so. The farmhouse had to be turned into a restaurant and kiosks set up where the public could get refreshment. Dr. Vevers, the Superintendent of the Society, and Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, the Secretary, spent so much time in the Park that they found it wise to secure pleasant adjoining sites for week-end cottages. They and the Society's Curators, Mr. Seth-Smith, Mr. Bushby, Mr. Boulenger, and Miss Joan Proctor—the lady who is so expert in managing frogs, lizards, and all reptiles—were in constant attendance with a large staff.

So the decoration and furnishing of Whipsnade went ahead, till it began to be ready for the reception of animals and, after the animals, the public. History does not record how Noah arranged the entry into the Ark, but he must have been a magnificent organizer to get all the animals in before the floods rose too high. At Whipsnade, since a flood is not anticipated, the Society is taking its time. Everything is provided for in advance, as in a town-planning scheme ; but, like a town, the Zoo is designed for gradual growth and expansion. Only about two-thirds of the area is at present developed, the rest being left almost untouched, with open fields and grassy slopes, hedgerows and footpaths ; and even the developed area is still thinly inhabited.

Amongst the first arrivals were some wombats from Australia—grey, bristly creatures with snub noses, which burrow and feed on roots. They have passed two winters

A zebra and a dromedary sauntering through a woodland glade in the new zoo.

on the northern edge of the Park. Unfortunately, when the arrangements were not so complete as they are now, one of them escaped, and after enjoying complete freedom for several months fell a victim to the local hounds. Some larger animals arrived a year ago, including zebras and elands—the greatest of all the African antelopes, with horns such as unicorns are supposed to have; but there are two of them, and they project upwards and backwards behind the ears. Though they are both warm-country animals, they bore the cold well and are in excellent condition.

"Pat" and "Doris," well-known inhabitants of the London Zoo, who were presented by the King, had children on September 23rd last year. Their four lion cubs were sent to Whipsnade in the spring. The young male was rickety, but the open-air treatment did him good, and he and his sisters are growing up into healthy country lions. Some flamingoes were also sent from London. These graceful creatures are not as sensible as they are beautiful. When the water, in which they love to stand, grows cold, they do not move: they are too stupid. They will let it freeze round their thin, long legs before it will occur to them to step out. Theirs will be a case for the electric heaters.

A small pack of wolves curled up under the trees

Some of the animals will come straight to England from their country of origin and learn their first zoo manners at Whipsnade. Polar bears, for example, have been brought from the Arctic, and before these words are in print will already have taken up their quarters in a temporary shelter at the Park. At the moment of writing they are waiting "somewhere in England," their exact location, in the meantime, being shrouded in mystery. Wild ponies have been brought from the Shetland Isles, but they have now been broken in and put in harness. Many animals have been presented by private donors, a large number owing the privilege of living in Whipsnade to the Duke of Bedford. On one occasion, when I was in the Park last July, I had the opportunity of joining in the welcome to three zebras and an Egyptian ass which had just come from Mr. Joel's stables in Newmarket. They arrived in a closed motor-van, which was backed through a gate into Spicer's Meadow.

Visitors making friends with one of the kangaroos at Whipsnade.

They behaved extremely well, though zebras are animals which can show nasty tempers. One of them allowed a member of the staff to scratch his nose, then stepped in gingerly manner down to the meadow, looked inquiringly round him at his strange surroundings, and trotted off on a tour of exploration. The mares followed. The Egyptian ass, a huge creature belonging to the biggest of the donkey kind, appeared to have seen enough of his travel companions, for he wandered off discreetly by himself.

For the most part, new animals for Whipsnade will have to be bought by the Society. There are zoos in every part of the world, and the supply of their needs is a large and important industry. Every continent has its agencies, and at least one of them—a firm in Singapore—issues catalogues of wild animals and birds, with price lists and descriptions of the specimens.

The route by which one approaches Whipsnade will make all the difference to one's earliest impressions of it. If one sees it rightly, one may find it entrancingly beautiful as well as amazingly varied. One might come to it from the north or north-west—when the entrance on that side is ready—and travelling over the plain see it from far off crowning the steep slope of the Downs; and having climbed the open Downside, penetrate to the quietness of the woods and glades, and beyond them to the open meadows with their backgrounds of trees and bushes.

Perhaps one of the most attractive approaches in the future will be from the direction of Berkhamsted, through the little village of Dagnall and the long avenue which will admit the visitor by Dagnall Gate. This is designed to be the principal entrance, but it is not yet ready. At the present stage of development, the visitor must use the entrance from Whipsnade village, on the east, approaching either from Dunstable by a gradual ascent of the Downs, or from Markyate, on the undulating plateau behind. In the latter case he will have an exhilarating surprise when he walks through the woods to the edge of the Park and sees below him a vast panorama of the Midlands.

My first arrival at this main gate was on a late afternoon in early summer. One road lay straight before me—Duke's Avenue—with a pine wood on the right and a wood, unfenced, with a great variety of trees to the left. It was an avenue between woodland all the way as far as the eye could see, with paths leading off among the undergrowth for the free use of the visitor and the tamer animals.

A notice "To Wolves" drew me to the pine wood, and northwards, by a rough footpath with the miniature forest on my right and deciduous trees and bushes on my left. "These Animals are Dangerous"—but there is a sufficient barrier of wire netting, and for a moment or two I could see nothing but the gloom of the forest and a tangle of undergrowth. But there they were: a small pack of wolves from Central Europe, and another of Timber Wolves from North America—unfriendly, slinking creatures with drooping tails, standing or lying curled up under the trees without the least interest in human beings.

How different are the bears whom I found greeting me on the right! One of them, a big Brown Bear, was going through all the movements of a dance in exact mimicry of a young girl who appeared to be giving him a lesson from the safe side of the fence. At present there are Brown Bears, Sloth Bears, and Himalayan Black Bears in a substantial enclosure all to themselves, with trees which they can climb, a pond, and one or two dens where they can hide when they want to; but they generally don't. They are sociable. They like human beings and buns. One of them has collected branches of trees and laid them horizontally across the treetops, thus making for himself a somewhat precarious nest in full view of the public.

Thence one may pass on through a wicket gate to the dell of Ouseley Pond, full of water plants, newts, frogs, and Fire-bellied Toads, with lizards sunning themselves (when it is sunny) on the banks; and beyond it, through another wicket gate, towards the spacious edge of the Down, where another ominous notice "To Bison" meets the eye. A herd of these shaggy, sullen monsters have a large slope of downland to themselves, called Bison Hill. There is a strong fence between them and the long stretch of country accessible to the public.

A little to the left I discovered the Prairie Marmots—odd, playful little creatures which stand on their hind legs like squirrels and beg for food—and the Wombats and the Axis Spotted Deer which, small as they are, keepers approach warily, and the Wallabies, or Tasmanian kangaroos. Cutting back through the wood between the two Flint Pit

Inquisitive and frolicsome, the lion cubs are as much interested in the visitors to their country retreat as the visitors are in them

Photo: D. Seth-Smith.

A pair of disdainful Manchurian cranes taking a stroll in the Bird Sanctuary.

paddocks, I found myself in Duke's Avenue again. Crossing it, I followed one of a number of desultory footpaths through Bluebell Wood, and through a series of exquisite copses which completely encircle the two Central Paddocks, where elands and zebras disport themselves. And here, wandering about in these leafy spaces, one can enjoy—especially in the early evening—the song of a multitude of birds, and meet all the time strange fellows wandering about—Muntjac, or little Barking Deer, wallabies, young and old, friendly peacocks with magnificent tails, and peahens, wild turkeys, and various small animals. In these woods it is possible to find oneself out of sight of other human beings and in a strange company of inquisitive, communicative beasts. One would scarcely be surprised if one met here the March Hare, or the Dodo, or Alice herself.

And thus one comes, by Wallaby Wood, to the other road which starts at the main gate—Central Avenue—which runs due south for a third of a mile, then bends towards the west, becoming Cut Throat Avenue, and later north again as Escarpment Avenue, taking one completely round the developed area.

Close to the main gates, at the north end of Central Avenue, is the Bird Sanctuary, which I visited another day and found that it deserved its name ; for the trees, the rough ground and the air were alive with the rustling and chirping of birds of many varieties, and in the morning and evening a flood of song emerged from the wood. No doubt it was rich in bird life before the Society ever thought of Whipsnade, but now it is more than ever appreciated for its cunningly-arranged nesting-boxes, its dips and, above all, its security. Wrens were nesting everywhere, and in some cases the eggs were not yet hatched. There were tits in scores, fly-catchers, woodpeckers, yellow-hammers, thrushes, blackbirds, and stranger fowl, such as Indian pheasants ; and just beyond the sanctuary, in one of the enclosures or on the large open lawn near the restaurant, or in and around the ponds on the far side of it, were other, exotic birds—South American Screamers which, like the Spur-winged Geese, have bony spurs on their innocent-looking wings ; black swans from Australia, wild turkeys from North America, macaws on perches arching their necks to friendly visitors, flamingoes in the pond, and commoner ducks and geese paddling in the water. And on the other side of the road, between Central Avenue and Wallaby Wood, is a space of short crisp grass where an elephant and one or two camels take

children, or grown-ups, for rides, and earn money for the Zoo.

In the midst of all this greenness and bird liveliness Hall Farm Restaurant has been cunningly devised. A few years ago it was an old farmhouse with cowsheds and outbuildings, and a farmyard, before Mr. Guy Dawber, the architect, took it in hand. The farmhouse and the cowsheds occupied two sides of a square. The former, renovated, has become the restaurant. The cowsheds have become "cloisters," with a gravel terrace in front which has tea-tables and parrot-perches and looks out on a decorated garden; and there, or on an enclosed lawn behind, you may have tea. In the late summer evening, dining in the restaurant, I heard a loud and persistent knocking on the window which looks out over Home Paddock. I saw a grave face with a long nose emerging from a red head. Going up to it I was introduced to a Sarus Crane, a dignified, self-conscious bird, almost as tall as the waitress who, when he knocked with his long beak, opened the window.

From Hall Farm a footpath leads one past Home Paddock, which the cranes share with Fallow Deer, and Chartley Paddock, where Red Deer and White Park cattle are grazing; and thence by a hedgerow bordering the undeveloped area to one of the refreshment kiosks, which have trees behind and a lawn in front for the use of picnickers.

One passes now into a region of spacious meadows open to the road, but on the other sides bordered by trees matured or newly planted. I got the impression here of a well-kept farm on a model estate, carefully stocked with well-bred beasts—but strange, uncanny beasts, and oddly assorted. They were grouped, roughly, according to the continent from which they came; Indian beasts in Round Close Panorama; other Asiatic beasts in Dagnall Paddock; British in Lay Meadow; Australian (later) in Holly Frindle Paddock and in enclosures farther north; South American in Hall Craft Meadow, and African in Spicer's Panorama. But this order was not strictly adhered to. With the Indian Black Buck and the Nylghai antelopes was a flock of Cheviot sheep, who have justified the experiment of bringing them south to a Bedfordshire down. They were clipped and dipped before June was out. There they were, as English as could be, hobnobbing with some gentle, biscuit-coloured Black Buck fawns; and one day I found that a camel had been sent to join the company.

Lay Meadow was completely British, with its Shetland ponies and its shaggy Highland cattle with spreading horns and long fringes. But the residents in Hall Craft Meadow are all foreign. Llamas are strange creatures to meet in an English field, with uncanny black rings round their eyes. But White Rheas—which are the ostriches of South America—are stranger still. They have odd habits. In one of the patches of grass which had been left uncut—since rheas are sensitive birds—one of them was sitting on an egg as big as a football. It was a cock-rhea. When the hen has laid the egg her duty is ended. It is the cock who is thenceforward the proud parent.

I was taken into a small paddock which lies behind the Meadow where two rheas were secluded from the rest.

"Have you ever been in an African native village," said my conductor, "and heard tom-tomming on drums?"

"No," I replied.

We approached the cock-rhea, who walked away from us a little flustered; and as he did so I heard the noise, deep and distinct, like the repeated notes of a drum—a sound which he utters when alarmed or when calling to his mate.

Of Dagnall Paddock, with its wild horses and yaks, I have already spoken, and of Spicer's Meadow, which has a host of African animals—zebras, ostriches, an Egyptian wild ass, Lechwe waterbuck and big Marabou stork which have long legs, long bills, long tails, and, over their crooked backs, long tail-coats. This meadow alone, with its twenty-two acres, is big enough to contain the greater part of the London Zoo.

We are urged to remember that Whipsnade is still in the making. The great pits which are to contain lions, tigers, and other big carnivorous animals have been dug, but the sides of the soft chalk have to be made good with concrete, and that will take time and money. The light wire netting which separates many of the animals from the public is to be replaced by wide ditches, so that there will be no visible bars or fences. That, too, will be an expensive job. To the south there are large spaces awaiting development, and in the already inhabited meadows there is plenty of room for newcomers.

And yet, even as it is, surprises meet one at every turn in this strangely wild and strangely sophisticated Park. There are surprising animals, surprising scenes, and surprising panoramas on the grand scale.

But it is best of all for the animals. They are not cramped by bars and narrow dens. They have room to breathe, and run, and fly. They are not hunted by beasts stronger than themselves, nor are they in danger of being starved or frozen to death. They enjoy much of the freedom without the terrors of the wild. No doubt if I were an animal of the African jungle I should prefer the African jungle; but next to that I should choose Whipsnade.

A SPARROW UPON THE HOUSETOP

By "BARTIMEUS"

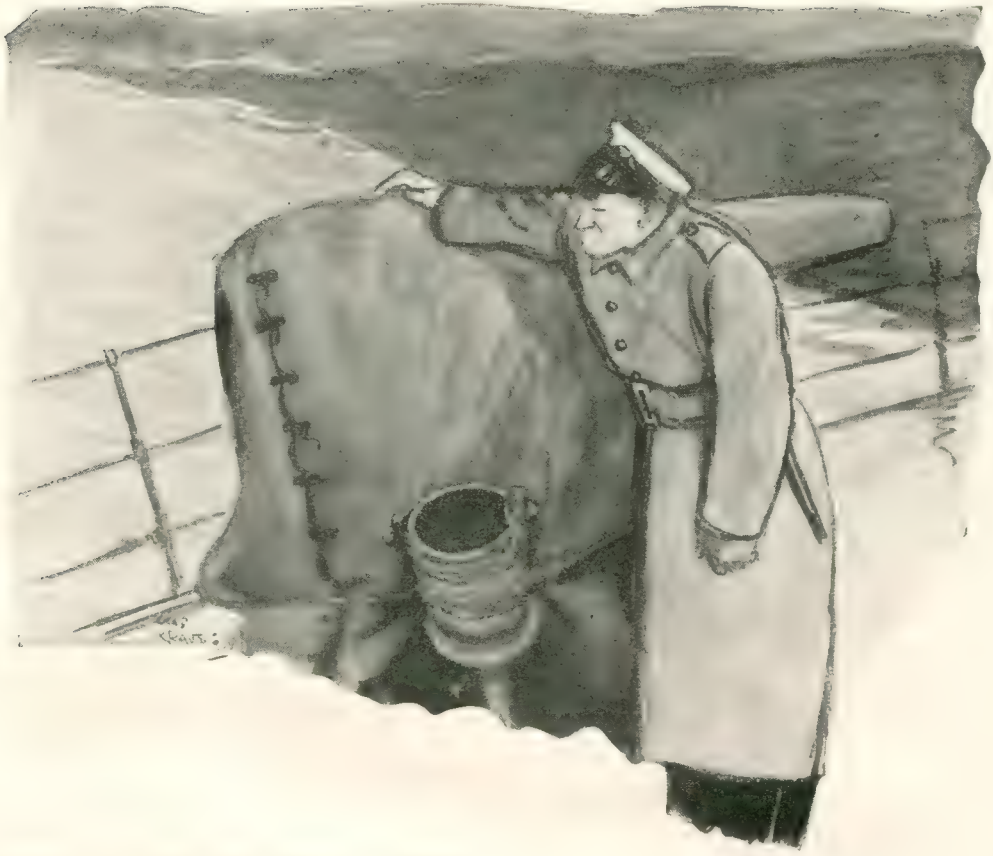
Illustrated by CHAS. GRAVE

THE last of the light was reflected on the streaming quarter-deck in patches of faint cobalt and rose. A film of water raced to leeward with the roll of the ship, surged in miniature breakers round the base of the after gunshield, and poured in a cascade over the low beading. The stanchion at the stern swayed and plunged against a turmoil of white water that reached away in a diminishing lane of effervescence to the bows of the next astern. Her forecastle rose and dipped with a stately rhythm. At one moment it burrowed deep into the flank of an oncoming sea, shovelling the grey-streaked water over anchor beds and foremost gun, like the snout of a pig searching for truffles under beechmast. Then slowly, deliberately, with the base of the fore superstructure awash, the bows began to lift. The water poured away from them in twin cataracts: the spray drifted high over bridge and funnel mouths; the dark, clean line of the stem reappeared, lifted the forefoot clear with every scupper-vent spouting white, and slowly, deliberately, recommenced the descent.

The marine sentry on the lifebuoy, high on the after superstructure of the leading ship in the cruiser line, looked down on it all and saw that it was anything but good. He wished that the superstructure was a good deal higher than it was. The seas came shouldering past with their crests on a level with his eye. The cruiser as she laboured would nudge one with her flank and an icy sheet of water spread out over him, as he huddled in the lee of the gunshield, to fall hissing and sluicing about his feet.

Whoop! That was a good one. He staggered a few paces and recovered himself, eyeing the bucket lashed to the pedestal of the pom-pom. Buckets! That was all the consolation he got from the Sergeant going his rounds. "Feel queer, do you?" said the Sergeant. "Well, you got a bucket, ain't you? What more d'you want? 'Oo d'you fancy you are—the Commander-in-Chief, waitin' for me to bring you a basin? 'Old yer 'ead up!"

The Commander-in-Chief! He was never off the Sergeant's tongue. Once upon a time he had been the Commander-in-Chief's orderly—years before, when the Admiral commanded some squadron abroad. To listen to the Sergeant you'd fancy it was the



The orderly staggered a few paces and recovered himself, eyeing the bucket lashed to the pedestal of the pom-pom.

orderly first and the Admiral nowhere. "We was tiger shootin' once in India, me and the Commander-in-Chief." That's how the Sergeant's pet yarns always began. The Sergeant had been his gun-bearer and had hob-nobbed with Rajahs, if you were to believe all the Sergeant said. And there was an incredible story about saving the Commander-in-Chief's life when a wounded buffalo charged. No one believed a word of it, or that the Commander-in-Chief in token of his gratitude stood sponsor to the Sergeant's firstborn—a snub-nosed, ginger-headed brat who favoured his father: the kid certainly flaunted the Admiral's patronymic before his father's surname: but that was probably just a bit of the Sergeant's swank.

Bucket! Pity no one mentioned buckets when he went along to the Recruiting Office to enlist. "Join the Marines and see the world." That's what they said then. Nothing said about buckets. He thought affectionately about the parade ground at the Depot, arid, dusty, where he had drilled. Hard on the feet it may have been, but it was immovable, substantial; it was Mother Earth. Whoop! He ducked as a sea splashed inboard and some of it playfully explored the space between his overcoat collar and his neck.

The Commander-in-Chief! He wished he was the Commander-in-Chief, afloat in a battleship. He watched them miserably, away to leeward, grey citadels as massive as cliffs. He had a chum in one of them. *He* was never seasick. A wardroom attendant he was. He wished he was a wardroom attendant. He wished he was Captain of the Officers' Heads. Whoop! He wished he was dead. . . . Bucket. . . .

The dusk deepened. A light appeared on board the next astern. A green and red jewel gleamed at either end of her bridge. All down the cruiser line lights were winking. They pricked the wet dusk like dancing

On the crest of a wave, flung high above their quarter, gleamed the carbide flame.

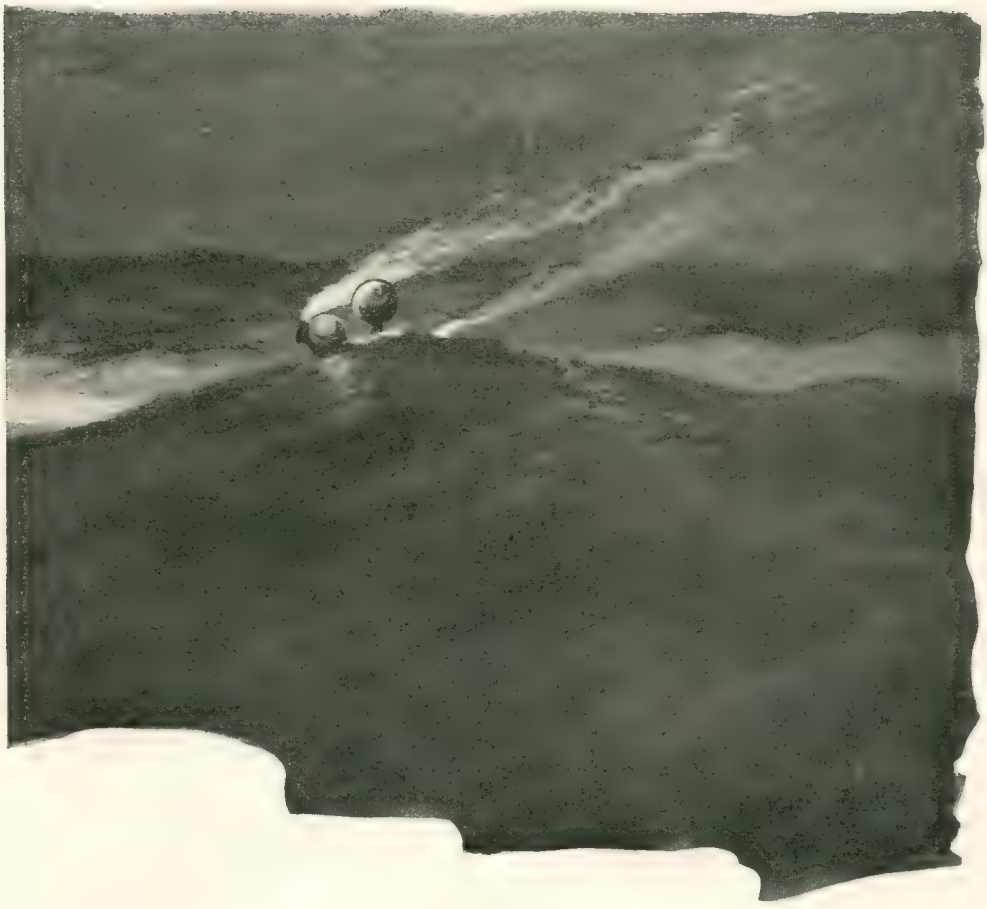
fireflies. The battleships abeam were strings of gems, each headed by the red gleam of the port bow light.

The sentry on the lifebuoy thought of the warm messdeck with the tin mess gear glinting in the electric light, where everybody was happy and chatty ; a gramophone going in one mess, a sewing machine whirring in another, messmates busy with button-sticks and polishing powder ; someone reading aloud from the police-court news, and behind the curtains of the box mess in the corner the Sergeant telling the Corporal all about tigers and Rajahs and the Commander-in-Chief, and him, the Sergeant, hard at work on a green woollen mat for his wife. At least he gave out it was for his wife, but one or two in the detachment knew better. A green mat with "Home Sweet Home" worked in orange and purple across the middle. . . . Whoop ! . . . They didn't make buckets with big enough openings, that was the trouble with the Navy. Buckets ! He knew a thing or two about the Sergeant. He wished he could have brought them out when there was all that talk about buckets and basins and Commanders-in-Chief. What about that time at Lisbon ? He went over one or two possible repartees in his mind. "No, Sergeant, I *don't* fancy I'm the Commander-in-Chief but I'm sorry for your wife." That was all right as far as it went, but not penetrating enough. "I don't want no basin, but someone in Lisbon will want her weekly allotment soon." That was better. Vicious. Hinting, like. The Sergeant would have turned pale and trembled. At least—Whooop ! Oh, Crikey. . . .!

II.

THE Commander-in-Chief, the real one, stood far above the surface of the heaving seas looking out at his great command, lines of grey, indistinct shapes and gleaming lights spread across the face of the waters. He was chatting to the Master of the Fleet, who at the conclusion of the present cruise was taking up an appointment in the Far East.

"You want to train somebody you can rely on as a gunbearer for big game," the Admiral was saying. "I had an Orderly—a big, red-headed marine. I took him everywhere with me. Capital fellow :



trouble was the native women were always falling in love with him. I remember once I had a long shot at a buffalo in some high grass and missed the beggar. At least I thought I'd missed him. He disappeared, anyhow. We picked up his spoor and I tried to follow him up. Stupid thing to do, of course. Went on for a couple of miles. Suddenly there was a crashing of undergrowth away to the left and there was my bull, head down, coming at me full tilt. I fired and missed again. Brute was right on top of us. Next thing was a bang that nearly split my ear drums and the buffalo pitched in a heap practically at my feet. Orderly had fired over my shoulder and got the brute in the brain. Must have somebody with you you can depend on. Now then, let's dispose the fleet in night cruising formation before we change for dinner——"

Orders were given, passed from mouth to mouth. Sending-keys clattered shorts and longs: a masthead light twinkled overhead: far and wide others winked, stuttered, stared. A rocket soared up into the darkness from the Flagship's bridge.

The Commander-in-Chief stood watching the rockets, the changing formations of the lights, the shadowy outline of squadrons and flotillas as they swung into their appointed places. Apart from a modest habit of thought he had been doing this sort of thing for too many exacting years to feel aware of the vast power he wielded. His feelings were rather those of an engineer observing a complicated machine, for whose working he is responsible, awake to smooth co-ordinated movement: a sober satisfaction. . . . And then, under his eye, away in the cruiser line, a light that should have burned alone, an emerald green, was joined by a twin gleam of red. The second ship in the cruiser line had put her helm hard over and swung towards the Flagship.

Hullo . . . ?" said the Commander-in-Chief.

The Sergeant thrust a bristling red moustache into the culprit's face. "You've flung the whole Fleet into chaos," he cried. "That's what you've done. The Captain says so."

III.

THE sentry on the lifebuoy in the leading ship of the cruiser line had no longer pity even for the Sergeant's wife. He had no pity for anyone, even for himself: he was past it. He had reached a stage of desperate queerness when his imagination, like that of a sufferer in delirium, wandered amid grotesque phantasma. He saw himself ringing the bell that linked his post with the officer of the watch on the forebridge. That wouldn't half startle them on the bridge. They'd think it was a man overboard and ease off a rocket. It would be a distraction. Then he'd reassure them, through the voice-pipe. He'd imitate the voice of the staff clerk at the Depot when he talked over the telephone: " Hullo, hullo, *hullo!* Can't you '*ear* me? Bruce speakin'. Bertie Bruce, Marine sentry on the lifebuoy. Is that the officer of the watch? Well, now don't get rattled, nobody's fallen overboard. I jest rang up for another bucket. Bucket for Bertie—Whoop! "

The ship gave a lurch that sent him slipping and staggering across the wet planking to the rail. He clung to it miserably. Bucket for Bertie. . . . Kind of pass word. Maybe a good name for a song. Not a song: a dirge. Like the Dead March. They could play it at his funeral. He wasn't long for this world. The Sergeant would find him dead at his post. Drop on one knee beside him and take his poor cold hand in his. " Bruce, my laddie," he'd say, and a scalding tear would splash on to the corpse. " Bruce, forgive me for puttin' you sentry on the lifebuoy out of your turn. Forgive me for speaking harsh to you last Sunday divisions. I'm not worthy to be your Sergeant. Speak one word to me, Bruce, brave lad——"

But too late, too late——

A wave crest, gleaming pale in the darkness, rushed snickering past on a level with his ear. He decided to regain the shelter of the gunshield before a wave licked him away from where he hung. The ship gave a wild buck-jump. He lost his balance—grabbed at something projecting from the rail. It gave under his hand. . . .

Oh crikey! He recovered himself and peered. . . Yes, there it was, the carbide flame gleaming on the crest of a wave, flung high above their quarter. No more buckets for Bertie. . . .

He'd released the lifebuoy!

The captain of the next astern saw the flare the next instant. For a moment he thought it was a fishing vessel under his nose. ' Hard a-port! " he roared. As the ship answered her helm the pungent smell of calcium drifted down on the wind. " She's lost a man overboard, I think," said the officer of the watch, staring through his night glasses at the leader of the line, " but there's no rocket and she's holding on her course."

" Shall I come round a bit, sir? " said the Navigator, anxiously. " We're getting rather near the Fleet Flagship."

" Signal from Flag, sir," said the voice of the Chief Yeoman out of the darkness; he paused, watching the bewildering flicker, and then translated it: " What are you doing? Sir? "

' Doing! " said the Captain, desperately. " 'Midships. Starboard fifteen. Dash my wig if I know what I *am* doing . . ."

The incident occurred halfway through a sort of " general post." The battle-cruisers, swinging past to their allotted position, saw the cruiser haul out of line, and concluding that she was out of control or had mistaken the signal, decided to give her a wide berth, flickering a warning to a flotilla of destroyers to keep clear. They, in their turn, somewhat embarrassed an aircraft carrier and a repair ship. The night glittered with angry interrogations, expostulation, and at length a single lamp, shooting thin pencils of light in the direction of an icily unresponsive Fleet Flagship, explaining about Bertie.

The Sergeant, who had been despatched to investigate, held the first brief but none the less awful inquisition. He peered, breathing heavily, at the place on the rail where the lifebuoy should have been, at the releasing knob, at the limp figure propped forlornly against the gunshield. He listened to the drear-voiced explanation, and flung out a gigantic hand to embrace the windy darkness, starred by the lights of the re-formed squadrons, and the whole outraged majesty of a Fleet in Being.

' You! " he cried. " An' what 'ave *you* done! " He thrust a bristling red moustache into the culprit's face. ' You've flung the whole Fleet into KAOS. That's what you've done. The Captain says so."

There was no answer, and the Sergeant warmed to his theme.

" What's the Captain goin' to say when we gets into harbour and the Commander-in-Chief sends for him? Eh? "

The sentry shook his head sadly.

' You don't know. You don't care. Why? Because you don't know the Commander-in-Chief."

Again there was a faintly negative movement of the sentry's head.

' Well, I *do*," roared the Sergeant, and drew a long breath while he took counsel of his imagination.

' Then you make it all right, Sergeant," came the faint answer. " *You* make it all right with . . . the . . . Commander . . . in-Chief."

WELL DONE, HORSEY!

By DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by STANLEY DAVIS

SOMETIMES one wonders where all the money comes from in these hard times, and then again one is content to thrust the riddle on one side. For London, which is grey enough in any case, would only be greyer still without those smart little restaurants and the smart, if slightly inexplicable, clients who come crowding into them for lunch and dinner. And if the money is still so unaccountably there, and if the clients choose to spend it on food and drink, and still more on all the luxurious details of decoration and service, well, well, don't let's be spoilsports just because we can't afford that kind of extravagance ourselves. The rich, it seems, are always with us, and it isn't our digestions that are going to suffer for their possible excesses. Smart little restaurants, we admire you and salute you. Nothing would please us more than to be able to patronize you ourselves.

That, however, is by the way. Enough of our own dreams of greed and splendour; enough, also, of these catholic observations on smart little restaurants in general. It is of Belloni's that we are actually about to sing; of Belloni's—formerly Rizzio's, and before that the *Café Superbe*—with its revolving doorway, and its green-and-gold entrance hall (with the bar lurking so suggestively down two steps on the right), and all its neat little tables and chairs, and all its cutlery and napery, and all its civil and sallow waiters, and all its sumptuous scents and smells, and all its wine-lists and colossal *cartes du jour*, and, last but not least—smiling to his superiors, stern to his subordinates, all things to all men and everywhere on the premises at once—with Carlo, its sleek and incomparable *maître d'hôtel*.

Belloni's—or Chez Belloni, as it prefers to style itself in so cosmopolitan a manner—lies, as there should already be hardly any need to tell you, in the very heart of the very richest and idlest section of the West-end. A quiet little street, with a few extortionate little shops at the base of a number of exorbitant flats and chambers, and then suddenly there's that discreet and veiled window, with the revolving doorway at one end of it and a giant in a plum-coloured uniform interminably obstructing the pavement. He sees you—as he saw Jock Elliston on the twenty-fourth of April—he weighs you in the balance; if he identifies you as a client, it is his duty to touch the peak of his cap. Then the door starts swinging, violently and not altogether sympathetically impelled by a plum-coloured page-boy, and a couple of plum-coloured flunkeys rush at you to seize your hat, umbrella, and overcoat, and then

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Jock felt sorrier than ever for her when Mrs. Melville, showing him a photograph of her late husband, told him how lonely she was.

there you are, and you'll be dashed lucky to get out again—even at lunch-time—under a couple of quid.

Not that it was the expense which worried Jock Elliston on the twenty-fourth of April, as he emerged from his hairdresser's at one o'clock sharp and directed his steps towards that quiet little street. Actually he was no millionaire, either; but when a man's job has kept him for three years in an outpost of our great empire, and when a man's salary has been piling up all that time, and when a man finally comes home for a shortish spasm of leave—well, then, of course you'll understand that a man, and a bachelor at that, doesn't plague himself with thoughts of economy or regard a little extravagance with any particular disfavour.

SO Jock Elliston put up at Bunn's Hotel, which isn't showy, but by gosh it isn't cheap, either. And he bought shirts and suits and other civilized equipment. And he went to his old Club, where one or two old friends recognized him with a slight effort, and were hearty at first, and then not quite so hearty, and then contented themselves with nodding over a newspaper. And he dined with his married sister and his brother-in-law, who at first reproached him bitterly for not occupying their spare room, and then faded out of his life almost as completely as if he were still on the other side of the globe. And he went, mostly by himself, to some plays and exhibitions and race-meetings, and somehow didn't get quite the kick out of any of them that he had so innocently anticipated.

So that already and only half-way through his leave, Jock Elliston was vaguely conscious of disappointment and disillusionment, and though he refused to admit this, and though he still frequently told himself how marvellous it was to be home again, there's little or no doubt that the outpost of our great empire was gradually assuming a more and more attractive guise. For there he was important, and there he had friends, and there he had occupation and responsibility and a niche. And there, though there was no question that he had often felt remarkably sentimental about Piccadilly, he had slept soundly and breathed deeply and never lacked for the steadying ballast of his job.

But here, only just round the corner from Piccadilly itself, he was becoming bored and introspective and altogether at a loose end. And when gentlemen are in this condition, and when they're neither old nor ill-favoured, and when they're quite prepared to spend money on almost anything which will help them to pass the time, no one should be surprised if they become slightly entangled with some equally idle member of the opposite sex.

Jock Elliston was introduced to Mrs. Melville at Sandown, and he also backed three horses for her, and they didn't exactly win, and Mrs. Melville didn't exactly pay. But though shy, he was also chivalrous, and then he'd been told that Mrs. Melville was a widow—which, instead of alarming him, affected him with a perilous feeling of pity; and he carried her losses without even secretly reproaching her, and accepted her suggestion that he should give her a lift back in his hired car, and even stepped into her flat, on her invitation, while she brewed him a mild and rather unpleasant cocktail.

During this brief visit he felt sorrier for her than ever, because Mrs. Melville showed him a photograph of her late husband, and told him how lonely she was.

"It's different, of course," said Mrs. Melville, "for a man." And she gave a sad, brave smile, and a sad, brave sigh, so that Jock Elliston felt called upon to explain how, in his case, it wasn't really so very different.

"But how terrible!" said Mrs. Melville, successfully concealing her intense pleasure at the intelligence. "But we mustn't have you getting hipped while you're over here, and going back and telling everyone how dull you've been. I'll tell you what," cried Mrs. Melville, gaily; "you shall take me out to dinner to-night, and we'll go to a play!"

So this was exactly what happened, and that was exactly how the entanglement started. Never for one instant, until the very last night before he was due to sail, had it crossed Jock Elliston's unsuspecting mind that this time-killing companionship might lead to anything more serious; and by that time he was also quite positive that Mrs. Melville—so unbusinesslike, so unpunctual and, despite her knowledge of menus, so remarkably inefficient at household management—was the very last woman with whom to return to any outpost of our great empire. Sentiment had at no time entered any more into his calculations than into those of Mrs. Melville herself.

But on that final and frightful evening the illusion of sentiment had certainly played round Mrs. Melville's person like forked lightning. In this electrical atmosphere she had suddenly wept, laughed, stormed, shuddered, crooned, moaned, sniffed, hurled herself on to a sofa and completely destroyed a small lace handkerchief. Moreover, and as if all this weren't quite disturbing enough, she had made it extraordinarily plain that the gist

of her trouble lay in Jock Elliston's approaching departure. She hadn't realized, she said; they'd been such friends, she said; nobody knew, she said, what all this meant to her.

Jock didn't, anyhow. He had been extremely embarrassed, but in vain, as you might say, was the net spread for this particularly unimpressionable bird. Only after he had left her—as he imagined for good—did a sudden, cold, guilty feeling come creeping up his spine and cause all his hair to stand on end. For what if, as the result of some terrible misunderstanding, he had given her the notion that he had trifled with her affections? What if, through sheer carelessness and thoughtlessness, he had conducted himself like a cad?

He spent a sleepless and harassed night in his bedroom at Bunn's Hotel, praying for guidance and trying desperately to shake off that sensation of guilt. At ten o'clock in the morning, when—still pale and shattered—he was in the middle of his packing, the telephone rang, and he nearly dropped the whole instrument as he heard Mrs. Melville's voice.

"Hullo!" he said, faintly. "Yes, I'm still here. No, the boat-train doesn't go till after lunch. What's that? Oh, rather. No, of course. No, I'll be delighted. A quarter past one? At Belloni's? All right. That'll be spup-plendid."

And: "Blank!" said Jock Elliston, as he replaced the receiver and tottered in the midst of all his shirts and suit-cases. For now, he knew, she'd got him. Now, he was only too well aware, his chivalry would conquer his shyness. Something in Mrs. Melville's tone had definitely removed the scales from his eyes. He looked back, and saw one act of folly after another. He looked forward, and saw no vestige of honourable escape. Within four hours from this fatal moment he would have done his duty as a gentleman, and Mrs. Melville—help!—would be fully entitled to tell the whole world. It meant booking another passage, it meant missing the boat at Tilbury and taking the overland route to Brindisi or Marseilles, it also meant that the rest of his life would consist of nothing but suffering and sacrifice. But was there any alternative? None, unless he intended to behave like the most arrant ruffian who had ever broken a trusting woman's heart. No, no; he was an ex-public-schoolboy and an Englishman with an Englishman's code of honour. Whatever the consequences, nothing, now, should make him falter in the only manly and decent path.

It is to such heights or depths of gentlemanly behaviour that, we can assure you, a man will rise or fall when he spends eleven months out of twelve upholding the traditions of his race so far behind the beyond, meeting nothing but stout fellows and rough diamonds, and reading nothing but cheap editions of the heartiest best-sellers. And perhaps you think him a bit of a hero, or possibly you consider him still more of a poor fish. But however he happens to strike you, you will at least realize now why Jock Elliston looked so haggard and worried as he emerged from his hairdresser's at one o'clock on the twenty-fourth of April, and directed his stubborn steps towards that smart little restaurant.

BELLONI'S giant spotted him, saw him turning towards the entrance, and touched the peak of his plum-coloured cap. The page-boy hurled himself at the revolving doorway, span it violently and buffeted the new arrival into the smart little entrance hall. Also, as you can imagine, the two flunkeys came forward with every intention of seizing his hat, stick, and gloves, and offering him a species of small, numbered pawnticket in exchange.

But for once the two flunkeys were disappointed and even slightly baffled. The tall, anxious-looking client never even glanced at them, never even paused while they could secure their usual trophies. Right past them he strode, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and only when he had arrived in the very centre of all those cane armchairs and glass-topped tables—where a number of Belloni's patrons were already smoking cigarettes and sipping cocktails and waiting for their friends to turn up; only then did Jock Elliston stop, and turn slowly round, and fix group after group with his careworn eyes, before groaning and sinking suddenly on to the little sofa by the glass screen.

No; she wasn't here yet, and now he came to think of it, it was still only five minutes past one, and it would indeed be exceptional if, even to-day, she were less than ten minutes or a quarter of an hour late. He pulled out one of his own cigarettes, and lit it. He laid his hat, stick, and gloves on the seat beside him. He shook his head as an attendant in a neat white jacket loomed inquiringly before him.

"No, thanks," said Jock Elliston, for though he could have done with the stimulant, he didn't want to be caught drinking here by himself. The attendant bowed resignedly, and withdrew towards the bar. Jock Elliston smoked, and continued to stare—dumbly, numbly, and glumly—at the revolving doorway.

And perpetually the revolving doorway span, and perpetually clients entered—perhaps a trifle more briskly than they had

The party of scandal-mongers movement in their chairs, for accompanied by a tall,

intended—and greeted or were welcomed by other clients, and joined the shifting groups at the little glass-topped tables or left this place of preparation altogether, and vanished behind the glass screen into the restaurant proper. And ever and anon the incomparable Carlo would appear on his rounds, smiling, rubbing his hands together, combining an effective humility with a no less effective air of autocracy; monarch, in a sense, of all he surveyed—yes, and chancellor of the exchequer, too.

gave a practically simultaneous Freddie wasn't alone, but was beak-nosed woman.

Once he remained for nearly two minutes, chatting graciously—and with a wealth of Latin gesture—to the group immediately in front of Mr. Elliston. And Mr. Elliston watched the spectacle dully, and listened—for was there any reason why he shouldn't listen ?—and then. . . .

Well, perhaps he forgot to stop listening, or possibly, again, in an excess of mental disturbance, his brain omitted to issue the correct instructions to his ears. And, anyhow, the group had rather penetrating

voices, and anyhow not one of them was more than a couple of yards away from him. And anyhow, once more, if they chose to discuss anybody with so striking and unusual a name as Horsey Cheeseman, was it really to be expected that someone who couldn't help hearing them should be so scrupulous as to point this out?

We hardly think so, and whether we think so or not, it can make no difference now to what actually happened. "Horsey?" one of the women had just exclaimed—the large woman in the blue hat. "Are you talking about Horsey Cheeseman? But, of *course*, I know him. Why, he nearly married a cousin of mine once, only as a matter of fact——"

And she began to laugh, and the rest of the party joined in her laughter, and even Jock Elliston—though he was quite unaware of it—registered a passing and slightly one-sided smile. What a ridiculous name, he was thinking. Really, he was thinking, of all the preposterous names he had ever heard! Horsey Cheeseman, indeed! And an echo instantly repeated the ludicrous syllables again.

"Horsey Cheeseman," said the man with the pink buttonhole. "Fancy old Horsey being home again! I must get him along to the Club—honestly I must—because, you know, Horsey and I—— Well, I suppose I'm about the only feller who's ever seen Horsey when he wasn't in one of his scrapes. We went yachtin' together, off the west coast of Scotland, and Horsey was sick the whole trip and there was no woman on board, anyhow. Most amusin' feller, and not a spark of malice in him at any time. We put him ashore finally, for his own sake more than because he was complainin', and the next thing I heard was that he'd got engaged to a couple of twin sisters in Glasgow."

More hearty laughter from the well-dressed group, and again even Jock Elliston had to rub the side of his jaw. Really, he was thinking—though he had by no means forgotten his watch on the revolving doorway—really, some of the scraps of conversation that one couldn't help hearing at a place like this were distinctly strange and peculiar. And, of course, he oughtn't to have listened, but——

"Mind you," added the man with the pink buttonhole, 'almost anybody could have got out of a mess like that, though I don't suppose anybody but Horsey would have had the nerve to say he thought they were the same girl. What? Didn't you ever hear that one? Well, it's perfectly true, I assure you, and it's one of the very few cases where Horsey was literally kicked out of a house. Yes, the old father did it, and I wish you could have seen Horsey's face when he told me. You know, so pleased to have got away without being spliced to one of 'em, that he couldn't help grinning though he could still hardly sit down. I say, all of you, do you think Freddie's forgotten we're lunching with him?"

"Well," said the small woman with the bunch of violets, "all I can tell you is that he rang up to remind me less than a couple of hours ago. Let's have some more drinks, and put 'em on his bill—shall we? Hi!"

The white-jacketed attendant came gliding over, received a shower of fantastic orders, and retreated swiftly towards the bar. Jock Elliston glanced at his watch, glanced at the doorway, pulled down the corners of his mouth, and ——

"SPEAKING of Horsey," resumed the woman in the blue hat, "you know, what always beats me is why everyone likes him so much. No, no," she added, quickly; "of course I'm not saying he's not attractive. I'm not saying he's not good-natured, either, because everyone knows he'd do absolutely anything for anyone. But, after all, when a man's jilted not less than two dozen perfectly nice women to my certain knowledge, well, what I say is—— What's that, Geoffrey? Don't be so stupid. Of *course* he jilted them!"

"I don't agree," said the man in the pin-stripe suiting. "Mind you, I'm not sitting here to say Horsey's got no faults. I wouldn't say that about anybody; and another thing, Norah, I don't pretend I can trace the whole two dozen that you're talking about—though I don't say you're exaggerating there. But I do know this, that in every single case where I've had anything like first-hand knowledge, it's always been the girl who's actually given him the push. You don't think so? Well, prove it, then. What about your cousin?"

"Oh, well," said the woman in the blue hat; "I'll give you my cousin. I'll admit that she broke it off—and a good thing, too, because she married a man afterwards with an absolute packet of money. But, of course, Horsey meant her to do it. He found out she didn't like rats—well, who does?—and he took to keeping them entirely because he hadn't got the pluck to say he'd made a mistake. Well, of course, when he came down to stay with her people and the whole lot escaped all over the house, what else could the poor girl do? She flung the ring at him, and Horsey was driving to the station before you could say knife, and—— Oh, thank you, waiter. Mine's the White Lady. But still," added the woman in the

blue hat, "that was only one case, and that's only what you might call a technical difference. Just look at all the others!"

"I'm looking at 'em," said the man in the pin-stripe. "At least, I'm looking at as many of 'em as I can think of at the moment. That hospital nurse, for instance——"

"What?" interrupted the woman with the bunch of violets. "What happened that time? I never heard that one before."

"Didn't you?" said the man in the pin-stripe. "Oh, that was one of old Horsey's best. Got himself smashed up in that frightful car of his. Happened to be engaged to another girl at the time, but *she* broke it off because he let her believe he'd lost both his legs. Oh, yes, she came down to see him and everything, but she couldn't see the legs, of course, and Horsey said it was all a misunderstanding afterwards—can't you hear him saying it?—and he came to the wedding when she married this other fellow, and absolutely had the nerve to say he'd forgiven her. Only meanwhile, don't you see, of course this nurse knew he'd only got a few cuts and bruises, and she was all over him—as they all are—and Horsey couldn't think what else to say when she was there all the time; so, of course, he asked her to marry him."

"And of course she accepted," suggested the woman in the blue hat.

"Well, what do you think?" said Pin-stripe. "Like a bird, she did. And there was Horsey, who couldn't even run away from her, because they'd taken all his clothes. So what do you think he did? Well, it seems this nurse was always lending him books, and he actually got the idea out of a medical dictionary. Looked up the symptoms of some fearful incurable disease, and started imitating 'em all, to the best of his ability. Of course, the nurse would never have been fooled by a silly trick like that, if only he'd done it a bit better. But he did it so dashed badly that she came to the conclusion he was going off his nut, and Horsey was dashed annoyed when he heard her telling the doctor, and piled on more symptoms than ever that he said any idiot ought to have recognized. But the girl was just scared out of her wits, and said she couldn't ever marry a man who was subject to delusions, and Horsey said he quite agreed with her and she'd far better marry the doctor. And she did, what's more, and Horsey sent them no end of a wedding present, and that's how he got out of that. No," said Pin-stripe, thoughtfully, as he sipped at his little glass of amber-coloured fluid; "the trouble with old Horsey is that he's one of Nature's bachelors, but the women simply won't leave him alone. I say, do you think somebody ought to ring up old Freddie? I can't think what's happened to him."

Nobody moved, however, and though Jock Elliston was still occasionally glancing at the revolving doorway, there was as yet no sign of Mrs. Melville, either.

"All the same," said the third woman in the little party—the rather pale-looking woman with the fur collar and cuffs; "all the same," she suddenly interpolated, "I don't mind betting you that Horsey's adventures are over this time. I know what I'm talking about, too, because I've met the woman and I've seen her and Horsey together—yes, that was what I was telling you at the beginning and it was at Freddie's flat, what's more—and if you ask me, even old Horsey has got his work cut out this time. Seeing," she added, meaningly and malevolently, "that he's gone and got himself engaged to a widow."

THERE was quite a little sensation among the group round the glass-topped table, and, indeed, if they had been less concerned with this piquant piece of news, they might have been still further startled by the behaviour of the solitary client on the sofa. But they were far too busy raining questions on their informant, and their informant was far too busy enjoying her momentary triumph, to observe how Jock Elliston gasped, twitched, and then sank into a posture of profound despair. For somehow or other, as all this frothy dialogue had filtered through his brain, it had seemed to him that this was a world in which a man might conceivably be victimized by his own conscience. Or perhaps the gaiety of Belloni's gilt-and-green paint had contributed to the birth of this new attitude; for certainly no one, as he well knew, could be less like Horsey Cheeseman than himself.

Certainly, also, it was unthinkable that in the brief time at his disposal he should either affiance himself to Mrs. Melville's twin sister (even if she had one), or rush out and come dashing back with a cage full of rats (even if she disliked them), or convince her that he had lost a couple of his limbs, or greet her on her arrival with a lifelike simulation of one suffering from Paranoia or Dementia Præcox. And yet, until this last moment, hope had certainly been rising in his tortured soul. There was, apparently, at least one character—highly regarded at any rate by his friends—who had shown himself capable of avoiding the marriage tie not only once but over and over again. It was not, therefore, a completely impossible feat, for what man had done there was at least a chance that man could do.

But now—even as the cloud had not exactly lifted, but had shown itself as not utterly immovable—a word had been spoken which once more plunged the entire firmament in the blackness of a permanent eclipse. For even Horsey Cheeseman, it seemed, was lost now that he was in the clutches of a widow. And if this were true of a man who had dodged no less than twenty-four ardent spinsters, how far more desperate was the case of the solitary gentleman on the sofa.

So that it was as much as the solitary gentleman could do not to groan aloud, bury his face in his hands, and collapse altogether under a blow which fell with redoubled violence after that brief glimpse of escape.

"A WIDOW!" cried the party round the glass-topped table—and again it sounded like a knell in Jock Elliston's ears. "You don't mean to say——" they began, confusedly. "You don't honestly—— You don't really—— You don't mean to tell me——" And then, all at once, in a supreme burst of interest and curiosity: "Who is she, Myra? What's her name?"

The pale-looking woman flushed at this tribute to her powers as a gossip. She even hesitated a moment, so as to heighten the effect of her importance—and Jock Elliston once more pricked up his ears.

"I'm afraid none of us know her," she said, a little regretfully. "But it just shows you what Horsey's like, because everybody knows he went abroad to get away from the Glaisher girl, and everyone knows that he started home again because things were getting a bit too hot out in Kenya. Poor old Horsey," she said, with a kindly laugh. "I suppose he felt he'd done rather a clever thing when he got on the boat and locked himself into the cabin. But it didn't last long. It seems this Mrs. Muggridge came on board at Port Said, and he proposed to her within forty-eight hours. Or if he didn't propose to her, it came to exactly the same thing. They're engaged all right, and I've never seen a woman who looked more like business. Poor Horsey, he was right under the weather at that dinner at Freddie's, and as for the woman herself—well, my dears, I wish you could all see her. Corking! It's the only word for her. Why, even Freddie—and you know what a tough nut Freddie is—even Freddie took me aside and told me she made his flesh creep. And that reminds me," said the pale-looking woman, "do any of you know why old Freddie's giving this party to-day? Is there any special reason, I mean?"

"Not that I know of," said Pin-stripe.

"He just rang me up," said the Blue Hat.

"Same here," said the Bunch of Violets. "I suppose he felt like a party, or something. I wish he'd buck up and come along."

"If you ask me," said the Pink Buttonhole, "old Freddie was looking a bit queer the last time I saw him. Well, it was last night, as a matter of fact, at the Club. 'What's the matter, old boy?' I said. 'You look a bit green about the gills, don't you?' He laughed it off, but to tell you the truth, I was quite surprised when he called me up this morning. I hope," said the Pink Buttonhole, benevolently, "he hasn't had a fit or something. It can't be money, you know, because a feller was tellin' me afterwards he'd heard that old Freddie had just come into a fortune. Perhaps that's why he's feeling so hospitable, suddenly. What?"

"A fortune?" said Pin-stripe. "Why, who the blazes could leave old Freddie a fortune? I don't believe he's got a relation in the world."

"Well, all I know," said the Pink Buttonhole, "is that this feller seemed dashed certain about it. Said he'd been told it as a secret by—— Gosh, that's funny! Gosh, I'd forgotten that. Why, it was Horsey Cheeseman who told him."

"Horsey?" said the Blue Hat. "But how on earth would Horsey know?"

"He's been seeing a lot of him," said the pale-looking woman. "I gathered that the time I dined there. Funny, in a way, because they usedn't to be particular pals, but, of course, Freddie's awfully good-natured, and I dare say he was sorry for the poor blighter. Besides, he'd always stand a meal to anyone. What beats me, in fact," added the pale-looking woman, through the smoke of yet another cigarette; "what I can never make out, is why old Freddie has never got married himself."

"Too cute," said the Pink Buttonhole, with a wink and a not very attractive laugh. "You women all seem to think a feller's got nothing better to do. Though now," said the Pink Buttonhole, "that he's come into all this boodle, I should say Master Freddie had better look out. Funny," said the Pink Buttonhole, reflectively, "my happening to hear that from this feller, and this feller happenin' to hear it from old Horsey. Shows how small the world is, what?"

"Not as small as your head, old boy," said Pin-stripe, agreeably. And again there was a general cackle of laughter, with perhaps just a trace of cocktail about it, from this very friendly and familiar group. Jock Elliston took another glance at the

doorway, but it was a distinctly perfunctory glance this time—partly because of a morbid craving to hear still more about Horsey Cheeseman and Mrs. Muggridge, but chiefly because someone at the glass-topped table had just slapped it with a resounding hand.

"By Jove!" cried the Pink Buttonhole, as all the little glasses shook and dithered. "You're right there, Geoffrey! Why, I'd clean forgotten something else this feller told me. Now, this *is* interestin', if you like. And it's about Horsey."

"What?" asked three or four voices, and Jock Elliston leant forward and almost visibly flapped his ears.

"Well, did you know all Horsey's money was in America? Eh? Did you?"

"No," said Pin-stripe. "And what's more, I know dashed well it isn't. Why, I happened to hear—it was when he was engaged to that Walmsley girl; she's a friend of my sister-in-law's, and they'd actually got as far as drawing up the settlements that time. I happened to hear, for an absolute fact, that it was all tied up in home stuff; and if it wasn't," added Pin-stripe, a trifle vehemently, "you can bet your boots old Horsey would have run through it years ago."

"Can't help that," said the Pink Buttonhole, just as doggedly. "It must have come untied somehow, because this was as good as from the stable. Why, this feller'd been seein' Horsey only an hour or so before, and Horsey'd told him—well, it was a secret, too, as a matter of fact, but we're all friends here. Eh?"

"Rather!" said everybody; and Jock Elliston only just checked himself, so intense was his curiosity now, from joining in the chorus.

"Well," said the Pink Buttonhole, slapping the table again. "This feller said that Horsey'd come an absolute mucker on the New York Stock Exchange"—perhaps it was Belloni's second cocktail which enabled him to pronounce these last four words in practically two syllables—"and that he was absolutely jolly well ruined. He said Horsey was absolutely marvellous about it—laughing and joking as though it was the greatest sport in the world—but he said he knew the shares himself and it was an absolute, jolly old smash. So there!"

"Well, all I can say——" began Pin-stripe, obstinately. But the women didn't want to hear about the intricacies of the market. The women—and Jock Elliston was all with them—went more or less bald-headed for the human element or love-interest.

"This widow!" interrupted the Blue Hat. "I say—that'll be a shock for her, won't it?"

"Or has she got money of her own?" asked the Bunch of Violets.

The pale-looking woman—the only genuine authority on Mrs. Muggridge—looked thoughtful, and shook her head.

"I didn't ask," she said—somewhat to Jock Elliston's disappointment. "She can't be absolutely broke, of course, or she wouldn't go travelling about like that. But she'd got a look in her eye—well, you know what I mean. If you ask me, it was as much the cash as Horsey himself that she was after; but all the same, I doubt if she'd give him up unless she thought she could do better. A sort of hungry look, you know; and when once a widow like that has got a real strangle-hold—well, no; I don't seem to see her letting go."

But Jock Elliston wasn't so sure. It was true enough that he based his opinion entirely on the few details which he had happened—and had had no business—to overhear. But sometimes, he thought, eavesdroppers as much as onlookers see most of the game. Why, for instance, should Mr. Cheeseman laugh and joke like that if he were really ruined? And how could he be ruined, if Pin-stripe's evidence were correct? But supposing, in a last, desperate plunge for liberty, he had spread that story about; and—by Jove!—that other story about Freddie (whoever he might be, but he was obviously another bachelor) coming into that large fortune. And supposing Mrs. Muggridge believed it. And supposing. . .

DASH it all, thought Jock Elliston, as his simple, one-track mind fastened fixedly on this problem. Dash it all, he thought, it was perfectly maddening to have heard so much of Horsey Cheeseman's deeds and doings, to have felt such increasing sympathy with his peculiar, yet not altogether blameworthy, character, and then to have the story breaking off like this just on the verge of its supreme climax. It was quite positive that in the present state of affairs the fellow would either be defeated at last or else would have achieved his greatest victory within a very few weeks at the outside. But in either event could he, Jock Elliston, possibly hope to learn the upshot? He couldn't suddenly speak to these people and say: "Look here, I've been listening to all you've been saying, and here's my name and address, and would one of you mind writing and telling me what happens to your friend Horsey Cheeseman?" No, dash it, he couldn't conceivably do a crazy thing like that. And yet—and yet if only he *could* hear the end! If only there were some imaginable method by which

his absolute craving could be satisfied. If only——

He turned his head with a jerk as the whole party of scandal-mongers gave a practically simultaneous movement in their chairs. And the men were standing up. And then the women were standing up, too. For Freddie—of course, this big, self-conscious-looking man who was coming towards them must be Freddie at last—wasn't alone, as Jock Elliston had naturally been led to expect, but was accompanied by a tall, beak-nosed, beaming woman, who was trying to catch hold of his elbow.

And she did catch hold of it, as Freddie stopped in front of his guests, and accepted their joyful cries of welcome, and then stood there blushing and wriggling his shoulders and twiddling with his free hand at his remarkably garish tie.

"Hullo, everybody," he said, as the cries died down. "Infernally sorry to keep you all waiting. But there's a reason, you know, and a reason for this little party, too. I want to introduce you all—except you, Myra, of course; you've met her already—to a great friend of mine. This is Mrs. Muggridge, all of you. She's done me the great what-d'you-call-it—the great honour, I mean to say—of taking pity on my rotten habit of trying to look after myself. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's quite official. We're going to be married."

Up jumped Jock Elliston, the plum-coloured page-boy sprang at the revolving doorway, and he strode straight out into the street. The impulse was purely automatic, but there was nothing, so his subconscious mind had informed him, to keep him waiting another second now that the story had reached this sublime and glorious conclusion. There was nothing more that he could learn now, there was nothing more that he wanted to learn. "Well done, Horsey!" cried his intoxicated soul, as he hustled through the rest of his packing at Bunn's Hotel, and as Mrs. Melville—who had arrived two minutes after his departure—grew angrier and angrier in Belloni's green-and-gold vestibule. "Well done, Horsey!" he was still thinking, as he drove to St. Pancras and boarded the boat-train for Tilbury. Only after the great liner had moved away from the floating landing-stage did this fortunate celibate suddenly stagger, gasp, thump his forehead, and realize what else the redoubtable Mr. Cheeseman had done for him.

But, thank heaven, there was no going back now. Thank heaven, he, also, had escaped. To us, perhaps, the not least noteworthy part of the whole business is that this is the only case on record of a client spending nearly half an hour in Belloni's smart little restaurant without once even so much as fingering the very pettiest of his cash. Well done, Horsey, indeed! And who says that the age of miracles is over?

MY LIFE ON THE STAGE

By

LILLAH McCARTHY

IV.—My marriage to Dr. Keeble—Arnold Bennett's Comments on a Title—G.B.S. and Robert Bridges—Thomas Hardy and Tess—Conclusion

I WENT to Windsor to discuss with the Queen's private secretary a big production which I was about to give in aid of a charity. In those days I was a member of the Stoke Poges Golf Club, and went on there from Windsor for the night. I had an uncanny feeling all day that the hand of Fate was directing me, and said to Evelyn Knight-Bruce (Evelyn Weeden) who accompanied me, "I know something big is about to happen." She chaffed me and said I was letting my imagination run riot. When we arrived at the club we found there was only one other guest there. He was introduced to us by the secretary, Mr. Lane Jackson, as Dr. Keeble. Within a week he asked me to marry him. We intended to keep our engagement a secret—not an easy thing when one is a public person.

I got this letter from Bernard Shaw :—

"18th January, 1920.

"I have been knocked sideways by a sudden proposal from Viola Tree to revive 'Pygmalion' with Mrs. Patrick Campbell. They talked nonsense about getting it on in a fortnight. That is impossible; but, anyhow, I shall be wallowing in rehearsals and production matters (including equinoctial nerve storms) until the curtain goes up.

"All this is due to the general impression that 'Arms and the Man' has been a tremendous success at the Duke of York's. As a matter of fact, with a theatre rent of

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£455 and enormous running expenses, it is only barely worth keeping on until something more popular can be put up. Loraine hankers after 'Superman' with Stella junior, and assures me that I have exaggerated Ann's importance; but I continue to exaggerate.

"I am told on first-rate authority that you led Keeble captive down to The Wharf, and introduced him as your affianced. Also that he captivated everybody there. And you told me that it was all nonsense. What is the truth *now?* Do you think Charlotte would like him? You know how shamelessly she prefers people's husbands to their wives.

"I come up to town to-morrow for rehearsals, and am looking forward to a very wearing time of it.

"Ever,

"G. B. S."

DR. KEEBLE had just accepted the post of Sherardian Professor of Botany at Oxford. He is an eminent scientist, and has made Botany his special subject. Then came the question of choosing a home, complicated by the condition that our house must be within a radius of three miles from Oxford.

My friends, the Masefields and the Gilbert Murrays said, of course, I must come near them on Boar's Hill. But easier said than done. There was not a house in the vicinity to be had; and, above all things, we must have a garden.

We bought some fields on top of Boar's Hill, facing full south, with wonderful views towards the Berkshire Downs, and decided to build a house there. We had heard of an old seventeenth-century tithe barn which was for sale near Hereford, and we drove over the Cotswolds one fine frosty morning when the country was white with snow, to inspect the barn. We loved it on first sight, and bought it for a mere song. Mr. Imrie, our architect, said there would be no difficulty in taking it down and transplanting it to our fields. As a matter of fact, it took several months. When the barn arrived, and the great oak beams, all duly marked and ready for re-construction, were laid out in our fields, to me it looked an impossible task to build them into a dwelling-house. It was no easy job even for the builders; one workman after another threw down his tools, saying the oak was harder to work than iron. Finally, we had to import ships' carpenters from Southampton to complete the job, which took a whole year.

Lady Mary Murray came over one day with her sons, Denis and Basil, and saw all the beams lying out in the fields. Full of solicitude, she asked: "Do you expect to build a house of all this rotting wood?" and although we explained to her that all the soft wood would be scraped off and the beams thoroughly cleaned with wire brushes and white wax, she still thought the house was bound to give way. When the house was finished she came to inspect, and was enthusiastic over the ingle nook, with its furnishings of orange-red leather cushions.

"Where did you get that lovely coloured leather?" she asked.

"From Morocco," I answered; "the leather is dyed in bullock's blood."

She threw up her hands in horror, and murmured: "And I have had all Gilbert's books bound in it. I hope he will never know."

Professor Gilbert Murray, being a strict vegetarian, would no doubt recoil with disgust at the thought of his translations owing the beauty of their binding to bullock's blood.

We were married on the 27th March, 1920; we took rooms at the Boar's Hill Hotel to be near our house and to make our garden. It was immense fun, as every moment we could spare we went working at the garden and jollying along the builders to hurry with the house.

In May, 1922, we were staying at Melchet when my husband was informed that he was to be in the Birthday Honours List; he was made a knight for his services during the War in the Ministry of Agriculture. Everyone showered congratulations on us. It was so funny to hear "Sir Frederick and Lady Keeble" announced, and to be called "my lady." I could not think whom they meant when they addressed me.

Bernard Shaw thought to have a title was no matter for congratulation, as he said "it is an empty-worded honour which only costs money to keep up," and in the latter certainly he was right. Charles Ricketts sent me a dear little letter:—

> "Both Shannon and I join in sincerest congratulations on your husband's new honour. I am not writing to him as I think 'Lady Lillah' sounds nice, though I suppose that 'archæologically' it is not strictly accurate."

This is what Arnold Bennett wrote on the matter:—

"13-7-22.

"At first I thought I would write to Freddie and congratulate him on his title, and then I thought I wouldn't and then I thought I would, and so on. You see: I wrote 'The Title.' Awkward position. But it does me good to see a

Lillah McCarthy as she appeared in "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife."

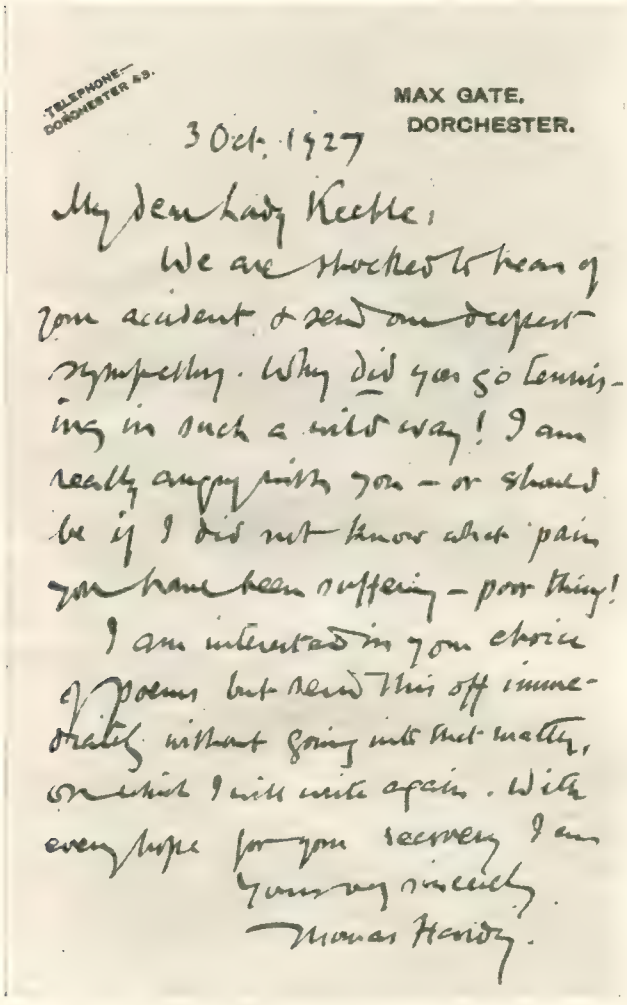
decent title for once. After all, it isn't he to be congratulated, but the order of knights bachelor. So I'm damned if I *will* congratulate him.

"My love to you both,

"Ever yours,

"A. B."

One day in October Bernard Shaw wrote that he and Charlotte were coming for the week-end. He was going to read his new play "Saint Joan" to me. The day before he arrived I was in Oxford shopping, buying some cloth of silver for a dress, and found at the counter next to me Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, and his wife. Bridges turned to me and said: "How I wish my wife would buy cloth of silver, but we are



TELEPHONE—DORCHESTER 43.

MAX GATE,
DORCHESTER.

30 Oct. 1927

My dear Lady Keeble:

We are shocked to hear of your accident & send our deepest sympathy. Why did you go Tennising in such a wild way! I am really angry with you – or should be if I did not know what pain you have been suffering – poor thing!

I am interested in your choice of poems but send this off immediately without going into that matter, on which I will write again. With every hope for your recovery I am

Yours very sincerely
Thomas Hardy.

A letter of sympathy from Thomas Hardy on hearing of an accident to Lillah McCarthy while playing tennis.

buying grey alpaca. My wife always wears grey alpaca."

I asked him to lunch with us on Sunday. "No," he said. "No, I never go out at all."

"That is a pity," I replied. "The Bernard Shaws will be there, and he would so like to meet you."

"I'd love to see G. B. S.," answered Bridges, instantly. "I will lunch with you on Sunday."

He came to luncheon. G. B. S. and Bridges talked and talked and talked, until Dr. Bridges, utterly exhausted, threw himself prostrate on the terrace. I ran to give him a cushion for his head, but he waved me off.

"Take it away," he said, "I must lie flat and recover from the strain of talking to G. B. S."

Later in the day, Shaw read his "Saint Joan." He had finished reading the fourth act and I was trembling with emotion and icy cold. I cried:—

"I can't bear it! It is too cruel. The audience will either go mad or shoot each other."

But Shaw said quietly: "Sit still, and listen to the epilogue."

"No, no, no, we *can't* have any more. It's all too painful," I answered.

He had read the fourth act in such a penetrating, cruel voice, Joan's cries: "If you tear me limb from limb until you separate my soul from my body, you will get nothing out of me beyond what I have told you!" and on to, "you promised me my life, but you lied!" I sat frozen with horror. Then he began reading the Epilogue. It was some time before I paid any attention, but he revealed it like a dream, in a soft voice, swiftly and lightly, so delicately that the ghosts came as happy spirits, and I became quite tranquil and the throbbing ceased in my head. But oh! I was so exhausted! Never in my life have I longed more to create a part than I did Saint Joan.

We went to a great ball at Blenheim given by the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, in June. Blenheim is a glorious place, and no more ideal setting can be imagined for an entertainment. We were very devoted to the Duke and Duchess. She is one of the wittiest, cleverest, most brilliant women I know. She has met and known the most distinguished people all over the world, her knowledge of literature and art is very wide—I can think of no one who is a more stimulating companion. The Duke is reserved, a great gentleman, yet so simple and kind and a most perfect

host. He knows the whole history of the Blenheim and the Churchill family by heart. My husband and he were always discussing gardens, the completion of those at Blenheim being one of the duke's hobbies—Capability Brown had continued the landscape garden planning started by Le Nôtre, but even so the terraces remained unfinished. This apparently was due to the great Duchess Sarah, who flung Le Nôtre and his assistants out because she considered he was taking too long over the work. Among the guests were the Ex-King Manoel of Portugal and his Queen. During the evening I was telling the King of my visit to Portugal, and growing enthusiastic said: "If you had a great leader in Portugal like Mussolini, your country would again be prosperous." The King looked very straight at me, and I realized mine was not a very tactful remark! There I met again Winston Churchill, and we had a long talk about old days.

I often discussed with Masefield my verse-speaking; he was wonderfully helpful, his advice and interest were an incentive to me. John and I have been fast friends ever since we met in the old Court Theatre days.

John Masefield has built in his garden at Boar's Hill a small shed; in this is a carpenter's bench, and his writing-desk, and here he writes his poems and books and makes most lovely models of boats and tall ships. He has made two for me, which I value very highly. Outside his shed is a small clearing in the bracken, gorse, and heather that surround it, where he has placed bird-tables and bird-boxes of all sorts for nesting and feeding. At four o'clock every afternoon it is an amazing sight to see every kind of bird, wrens, tits, blackbirds, thrushes, chaffinches, robins, hundreds and hundreds of them, circling round his head and shoulders, eating out of his hand; for, day by day, he never fails to stand outside the shed with the most tempting food for his feathered friends, dried currants, millet, meat, and bread-crumbs. He looks like St. Francis of Assisi with all the birds perched on his head and shoulders, or quite tamely eating out of his hands.

Poets are not easy people to know; they are curiously shy and diffident as a rule. Perhaps one of the most difficult was Thomas Hardy. It took me a long time to get through his outer crust and find the real person. I had known him for many years. Indeed, so early as 1910 I had entered into a correspondence with him in reference to doing some *matinées* of "Tess."

The first time I met Hardy was at Mrs. Crackanthorpe's house in Rutland Gate. She was a great friend of his, a remarkable old lady, and had asked me to tea to meet him. In the course of the afternoon, he came in, and we sat discussing poetry for hours. Next day Mrs. Crackanthorpe wrote:—

"Sunday evening.

"You stayed too short a time to-day. Directly you had gone I remembered something I wanted to tell you!

"Thomas Hardy stayed to dinner He is keen, keen on the 'Theatre' and everything connected with it. (I believe the secret wish of his heart is to see scenes from 'The Dynasts' staged before he

Lillah McCarthy as Annabel Bradly in "Too Much Money."

passes on—but *that's* not what I wanted to tell you !)

" This it is. He has got, actually finished, ready, *his own dramatized version of 'Tess'* (not the American version, which is still being played all over the States, he told me) but his own. He has promised to send me this, his own, drama of 'Tess' as quickly as he can.

" And I am confident he would let the Repertory of our 'vision' (*not* dream) have it, if we asked for it.

" *More.* He is quite ready to dramatize 'Jude the Obscure' (which I hold to be quite his finest *novel*. 'The Dynasts' is, as I see it, quite the biggest thing he has ever done)—and I believe he is, too, quite ready to do it for the Repertory Theatre ! Wouldn't that be *splendid ?* You see, he is very keen about 'Jude the Obscure' because the critics crucified him about it. And he has never, in truth, quite recovered. He would therefore have a special joy in making a drama of it and *ramming it down* after these long years ! Twenty years nearly it must be.

" Yours very sincerely,
" B. A. CRACKANTHORPE."

Something happened. I cannot remember now, but I know I was not able to read " Tess " at the time. I did not see Hardy again until I was playing Masefield's " Nan " at the St. James's. I had just come off the stage when my manager came and told me that Mr. Thomas Hardy would like to see me. Hardy came in, trembing with emotion. I, too, was very agitated. That last act of " Nan " is so powerful that it always puts me into a state of intense excitement. I knew Hardy had just received some honour, so I addressed him as " Sir Thomas."

" No, no, no," he said. " Only the O.M. I am still plain Thomas." He caught my hands, and continued : " You must play my Tessy. I will send you the play I have made of my Tessy. Promise me you will play my Tessy."

This time Hardy sent me " Tess." I read it and went at once to see him. We had a long talk, with the result that I could arrange some *matinées*, and told him so. He wrote :—

" June 17, 1910.

" I am glad to get your letter about Tess, and I think I had better leave the whole matter in your hand. If you would like to produce it at those three *matinées*, please do. In that case, assuming that it would be played again in the autumn, I would not think any more about the Brussels offer, but send something else there.

" I suppose the suggested changes in the third act would not be heavy, and would be mainly of the nature of omissions ? The only stipulation I should make on that point would be that, whenever any arrangement we may enter into comes to an end, and right of performance lapses into my hands, I should not be compelled to omit the modifications if I wish to retain them.

" On the other hand, as a matter of policy, it might be wise in you to play the tragedy exactly as it stands, and allow me to be the scapegoat for its imperfections.

Detail of a striking portrait of Lillah McCarthy—from the painting by A. A. McEvoy, A.R.A.

I would take these defects upon my shoulders by writing a prefatory note to the play-bill to that effect. Experts often, by eliminating crudeness, destroy the crispness and *naïveté* of a play. However, do as you like.

"What I should also stipulate is (I suppose) that, in the event of the play promising a commercial success, some guarantee of its continuance should be given. Otherwise, when you had 'created' the part, no other leading actress might care to take it up. I am not keen on making money out of it, but not being a rich man, I naturally should like to get what may be got, if anything.

"You are probably aware that no authorized version of the novel for the stage has ever been performed in England (except, of course, the Italian opera, which is entirely different from the play and ends at the parting after her confession), all the other versions having been piracies.

Ever sincerely,
"Thomas Hardy.

"P.S. Cannot you come to see us again next Thursday? T. H."

However, the performance did not take place. I found it was impossible for me to do "Tess" at the time. The next occasion on which I met Hardy was during the performances of "The Dynasts" at the Kingsway during the War. When I took up my recital work seriously, we became great friends. Our mutual love of poetry brought us together.

Hardy never realized how greatly he was appreciated and loved. "I have not a large public," he once said to me. "I assure you until quite lately, I was not considered 'nice,' and my 'Jude the Obscure' was considered to be too advanced for the young ladies of 1896."

No portrait gives a true picture of Hardy; there were really three Hardys; first, the man Hardy, slight, dapper, short, with something in his eye and bearing of the retired sea Captain, direct of speech, objective, speaking and thinking of his life and work as something outside himself. Then Hardy the novelist. A realist, but running through the hard granite of his realism are veins of softer and brighter substances, in fact veins of sentimentality and romance. The third was Hardy the poet, the writer of absolute and unique beauty, who discovered that for him the poem was the perfect medium of expression.

There is in these brief poems no room for sentiment or comment. They declare the tragedy of the world without indignation. They are sheer statements of things as they are. As he grew older his genius seemed to become more mature and he lost the bitterness we get in his earlier work. At our last meeting he spoke of his successes and failures with complete detachment, yet with quick interest, and with none of the indifference of disillusionment which sometimes accompanies old age. He seemed more interested in life than he had ever been, and nourished no grievances. He always wanted me to speak his verses. "I think they are my best work," he wrote to me. "In the 'Tramp Woman's Tragedy' I have condensed a three-act tragedy into a seven-minutes' poem." When he died I gave the manuscript, prompt copies and photographs of "The Dynasts" to his widow as a memento of the friendship I bore Hardy.

THE close of 1930 was a sad time for me, as I lost one of my closest and dearest friends in the passing of Lord Melchett. He had been ill since his return from America in September, but no one seemed to think there was any cause for alarm, so when I heard he was sinking I could not believe it was true. Alfred was such a vivid personality, a really great man, such an old and valued friend, it did not seem possible that that great brain, that splendid intellect, should be no more, when, as it seemed, they were at the zenith of their power.

Louis and Colleen Vaughan were spending Christmas with us at Hammels when the news came that Lord Melchett's condition was serious. Lady Oxford was lunching with us, and the news arrived too late to put her off, but she was so sympathetic, so marvellously understanding of our great sorrow. She respected our grief and silence, and when the message came that Alfred was no more, we each went to our own rooms, and Lady Oxford departed, leaving us alone to our sorrow, which was too deep for words. It was a sad ending to the year that had opened so happily with a New Year's dance at Melchet—this passing of one of England's greatest and truest sons.

Life is like that, everything passes, but as I sit here in my window, and look out on my garden, I see Nature renew herself again, and say, "if all passes, all begins anew as well." I see the buds bursting on the trees, the almond and cherry blossom making a glory of the garden, the daffodils waving their saffron heads in the breeze, and all the world renewing itself again in the beauty and wonderment of Spring.

THE END.

THE WAGER

By JOHN GLYDER

Illustrated by LEO BATES

"THESE armchair critics," pronounced Berwick, pontifically. "These theorists—what the devil's the good of 'em?"

"N.B.G.," said Clay, a little thickly.

"Nobody, in my opinion," continued Berwick, "ought to be allowed to write about things unless they can do 'em."

"Of course—of course, they shouldn't," chimed in the sycophantic Clay.

There were six of them lingering over the port at Berwick's place. John Berwick himself, short and portly with a big jowl, stood by the fireplace gesticulating with his cigar. Before the War he had just been Berwick the Chemist, after that it had been Berwick, Ltd., with a chain of shops in all the more important suburbs. And now it was John Berwick, O.B.E., J.P., of the Manor House, West Melling, with a crowd of sycophantic friends who came to eat his food, drink his port, play tennis on his courts, and borrow money when necessary. Berwick bought his friends as he had bought his wife and bought everything else he wanted. There were five of them. Simcox, the bank manager, Patterson, the journalist, Baines, the schoolmaster, the sycophantic and slightly inebriated Clay, and young Cleaver. Cleaver was the only person who looked as if he didn't belong. He had written three or four novels and they had sold passably well. One had been filmed. Cleaver didn't fit in. They felt it and they were always getting at him. It was his air of superior breeding, perhaps, or the uncomfortable feeling that he saw through the rest of them. Still, all was fish that came into Berwick's net.

He liked to talk of young Cleaver, the novelist, and think that the sale of his books was due largely to his own influence.

"Wharrabout Cleaver?" said Clay, with a snigger.

There was a general laugh at that.

"He writes all this stuff about crooks," continued Clay, rather pleased at his success, "and what's he know about 'em? Could he bump anyone off, or burgle a house, or put people on the shpot?—No. What right has he to write—what right to write——"

Everyone looked at Cleaver. His face had flushed.

"How do you know I couldn't?" he said at last. "You don't know what I do in my spare time, do you?"

"Bet you you couldn't burgle a house," insisted Clay.

"You think I'd be afraid to?"

"I don't think. I know, old chap," said Clay. "There's all these pictures and plate——," he waved his arms expansively round the dining-room which was filled with Berwick's purchases, "—bet you you couldn't burgle any of those. Could he, John?""

"I should be sorry for him if he tried," laughed Berwick. "I'm not afraid of burglars, I keep a gun under my pillow, and

I hear the slightest sound. No, I agree with you, Clay. It's all very well to write about these things—like that fool of a political correspondent on the *Morning Argus*—but when it comes to doing them—well, that's another matter."

"Quite," said Simcox.

"You think I couldn't break into your house and get away with something worth taking?"

"You'd be lucky to get away with a whole skin," said Berwick, with a chuckle. "There was a fellow tried it on a year ago. I got him through the arm."

"Oh, well," said Cleaver, calmly. "I'll do it, anyhow."

"Rafflesh," chuckled Clay. "Just look at Rafflesh. You didn't know you'd been entertaining Rafflesh, did you, John?"

"All very well to talk like that," sneered Baines.

"Oh, it's not only talk," said Cleaver. "I'll do it. It will be a splendid advertisement."

"I'll write it up for you," said Patterson, with a grin.

"Very well, then," said Cleaver. "I'll pay you a hundred if I fail, on condition that you let me keep what I take if I succeed."

"Don't be a fool, Cleaver," said Simcox. "You'll only get stung."

"He will," said Berwick, complacently. "Still, if you really want to——"

"I do."

"Good. And what about a time limit?"

"A week will do me. By next Saturday."

"Very well, then," said Berwick. "Of course, if you like to be fool enough to take it on, well—the responsibility is yours if you get hurt."

"Quite."

"And Patterson shall send it along to the Press?"

"Certainly."

"You damned silly young ass," said Clay. "Oh, you silly young ass."

"Well, that's settled," said Berwick, irritated by Cleaver's complacency. There had always been something about Cleaver that vaguely annoyed him, though he had never probed deep enough to bring it to the surface. "That's settled, then. Saturday week. Very well. You're quite sure you wouldn't like to change your mind?"

"Quite," said Cleaver, very definitely.

"Well, let's go along to the billiard-room and have a game of snooker."

"Prapsh he'd like to have a look round first," suggested Clay, "to see where he's going to get in."

"Better have a look to see where he's going to get out," said Simcox.

"I don't mind if you'd like to take a walk round," said Berwick, with a wink at the rest of them.

"No need," said Cleaver. "I know exactly what I'm going to take and how I'm going to take it."

"Sounds as if he'd been planning this some time," said Baines.

"In hish spare time," said Clay, with a chuckle. He rose a little unsteadily, supporting himself with one hand on the table till he was more sure of his balance.

"Possibly," said Cleaver. "If one knew what everyone did in his spare time, it would afford some interesting revelations, don't you think?"

THEY joined the ladies in the lounge hall. Mrs. Clay, sprawling across a settee and displaying a fat expanse of leg, Mrs. Simcox painted and pouting—the Simcoxes only came to the Manor because the exclusive set refused to admit them—vulgar little Mrs. Patterson—Baines's soured and depressed spinster sister—one or two unattached younger women—all very noisy and competitive in their noisiness.

Mrs. Berwick sat by the window. She looked like a Madonna who had somehow strolled into a public-house and was trying to make the best of it. She was the daughter of a struggling country parson who had been somewhat improvident in the matter of children. When the parson had grown tired of his struggles and departed to a better world she had grown tired, too, and departed to a worse one. She did her best to get on with her husband's friends, but it was not a success, as he frequently took occasion to tell her—sometimes in private, sometimes not. Still, he was very proud of her as he was proud of his oil colours, and his etchings, and the other things he bought. For some reason the worst clash seemed to lie between Mrs. Berwick and Cleaver. They had reached the stage now of completely ignoring one another. Berwick didn't mind. Nobody liked Cleaver, and it was only his achievements that made him tolerated.

Standing there Berwick asked himself a question. He rarely asked questions of anyone, let alone of himself, believing he knew all the answers. But that remark of Cleaver's about spare time had somehow set him thinking. Why did Cleaver come there? There were plenty of other circles open to him. He was welcome at a good many houses. Berwick had certainly been able to do something for him at the libraries, and his food and port and cigars were the best in the county; still, why did Cleaver come there? He disliked Cleaver, though to a certain extent he hid it. Marjorie hated him and made no attempt whatever to hide her feelings. Clay loathed him, and so did

Simcox and all the rest of them, and lost no opportunity of getting at him. Was it possible that after all there was something in that half-drunken suggestion of Clay about Raffles? Absurd, of course it was absurd. Anyhow, this would be the end of Cleaver; he would never face the ridicule once he had failed, as he certainly would, and the papers got hold of it. Just the sort of thing the *Morning Argus* liked to spread itself over.

They were all laughing at Cleaver now—Clay, of course, had told them about it—Marjorie most of all. Strange the enmity between those two. That dress suited Marjorie. Ought to, considering what he paid for it. He always made a point of telling people what he paid for Marjorie's dresses. Made them envious. He always told them the price of everything, the price that was asked—not the price he paid. He was adept in picking up bargains. They were calling Cleaver Arsène Lupin, and Moriarty, and all sorts of things, and Marjorie was the worst of them. Cleaver stood there pale with anger, his hair ruffled, his jaw thrust forward, stammering a little as he did when roused.

"All r-right," he said, "all r-right. He who l-laughs last——"

"Lul-lul-laughs lul-loudest," mimicked Clay, with a vulgar guffaw.

"What I undertake, I do," said Cleaver. "I warn you."

There was something about his assurance that Berwick found, to his secret annoyance, vaguely perturbing. Well, he wouldn't get away with it. He'd see to that, even if Cleaver was the most adept crook in the kingdom. He looked at Cleaver and he laughed. The idea was absurd.

They went into the billiard-room and played snooker. The game was merely an excuse for drinking, talking scandal, and telling ribald stories. They never stopped baiting Cleaver, but though he got ruffled a bit, there was at the back of him still that calm assurance which so nettled Berwick. A little later on he missed Cleaver, and going out into the lounge, caught him handling a bronze of Psyche, a beautiful piece of work which had cost him thousands.

"Hullo, Cleaver," he said. "Making a selection?"

Cleaver put the bronze down a little hurriedly.

Mrs. Berwick sat by the window, looking like a Madonna who had somehow strolled into a public house and was trying to make the best of it.

"I really wasn't thinking what I was doing," he said. "I just came out for a smoke and a rest. It's rather noisy in there."

"It is," agreed Berwick, with a smile that was half a sneer. Cleaver didn't seem to notice it. He made some comment on the bronze.

"I appreciate beautiful things," he said.

"Well, you've got plenty to choose from," said Berwick.

The party dispersed noisily at eleven o'clock. Berwick insisted on that; he liked to get a good night's rest. They all had a parting jest for Cleaver.

"The damned young fool," said Berwick. Nevertheless he went very carefully round the house and assured himself that the burglar alarm was working. Cleaver did not know about that. Not a window could be opened or a door forced without a bell ringing in Berwick's bedroom.

He went to bed, but he slept fitfully. He could not stand the thought of Cleaver getting away with that bronze of his. It was the most valuable thing in the house. To-morrow he would put it away in a safer place. No, he wouldn't. That would be weakness. People would notice and ask why he had moved it. When at last he fell asleep he dreamt that he had woken up in the morning to find himself stripped of everything, even his clothes. This was absurd. Cleaver was getting on his mind. He resolutely determined to think no more about him.

He was busy at the time with a new chemical combine, and this, with the numerous other side-issues in which he interested himself, fully occupied his day. He had little time to think of Cleaver. Three days passed and still Cleaver made no sign. Clay and the others dropped in at intervals to make interested inquiries. Opinion was pretty unanimous that Cleaver had got cold feet and would just fade out spinelessly without making an effort. Clay was of opinion that Cleaver was drunk at the time,

but then Clay was always accusing people of that.

Berwick began to hope that he would have something better to boast of than a bloodless victory like that. On Friday night he fancied he heard someone on the gravel path outside, but he did not get up, and nothing happened. Berwick washed him out after that. The man would hardly be fool enough to leave it till the last night. Anyhow, he would have the satisfaction of making Cleaver pay up. There had already been a paragraph in the gossip notes of the *Morning Argus*. The sort of thing that Patterson was an adept at. "I was dining the other night with John Berwick in his interesting old house, the Manor, at West Melling. The house has a most interesting history," and so on, and so on, till he came to the story of the wager. Well, Cleaver would look a bit of a fool when people got to hear how he had backed out of the whole thing.

Saturday night came. Marjorie had gone to bed with a pain somewhere or other. She was always doing that, and always at the most inconvenient times, just when he had a dinner on or some occasion when he particularly wanted to show her off. She had stopped sending for the doctor. He had forbidden that. He got nothing that way in return for his money. Clay and the others turned up in full force. They were all very noisy and jubilant.

It was just after dinner when Cleaver strolled in. They were dancing rather noisily in the drawing-room to the gramophone. His appearance was dramatic in its unexpectedness. They all stopped dancing and Clay switched off the gramophone.

"Hullo, old man," he said. "Didn't expect to see you."

"Why not?" asked Cleaver, calmly.

"I seemed to remember hearing something about a bold, bad burglar," said Clay.

"Quite," said Cleaver, lighting a cigarette, "but I've still got till twelve o'clock to-night, haven't I? Where's Mrs. Berwick, by the way?"

"She's in bed with a headache," said Berwick.

"Hard luck," said Cleaver. "I sha'n't disturb her if I look you up later on?"

"Not in the least," said Berwick. "What time may we expect to hear from you?"

"Oh, twelve-ish," said Cleaver. "Well, I'm holding the dance up. I only just dropped in to remind you about our little wager. Good-night, everybody."

"Here," said Berwick, "hold on a minute, man. Have a drink before you go. It'll brace you up."

"No, thanks," said Cleaver. In the hall he picked up the bronze of Psyche, looked at it thoughtfully, and put it down again.

"Till twelve," he said, and went out.

"What the hell do you make of that?" demanded Berwick, irritably.

"Been writing too many novels," said Simcox. "It's got into his system. It's like that fellow in his last one. A piffling yarn, I thought. Wrote and told people the exact hour he was going to burgle their houses and then brought it off. That's all very well in a book. But in life, well—such things simply don't happen."

"They're not going to happen here," said Berwick, grimly. "I don't know what the fool's got at the back of his head, but I've got a hunch he's going to try."

"Look here, old man," said Clay, excitedly. "What about the lot of us staying here to see? Then, when he comes along and you've got him cornered with your gun, we all hop out of our little lairs and cackle? How's that?"

The picture rather appealed to Berwick. He liked an appreciative audience. And, after all, it was going to be rather a dull show with his wife in bed and no one there to witness his triumph.

"Well, if you really think it's worth it," he conceded.

"Oh, yes, do let us stay," chirped Mrs. Clay, "it will be such fun. He wants a lesson badly, does that young man. Just because he's written a couple of cheap novels——"

"Such fun," chirped the vulgar little Mrs. Patterson. "You will let us stay, won't you, John?"

"Oh, all right," said Berwick. "But you'll have to keep out of the way."

CLAY started the gramophone. By eleven o'clock they were all very noisy. Berwick, irritated by his wife's absence and anxious to key himself up to a grand finale, had taken considerably more than was good for him. They scattered gustily upstairs. Berwick, having fetched his revolver, decided to spend the period of waiting in the lounge. Quite certainly Cleaver would make for that bronze. And directly Berwick heard a sound he would vanish behind the curtain in the doorway, ready to make a dramatic re-entry, gun in hand. Twice he had to call out to the unseen spectators above. They were making too much noise. Gigglings, and laughters, and shrieks came out of the darkness. There was little thought for the invalid in her room.

Time dragged. He sipped at his whisky and things became vague and misty. The melodious chime of the grandfather clock

Berwick caught the young man in the lounge handling a bronze of Psyche, a beautiful piece of work which had cost thousands.

seemed to come to him from a vast distance. He felt drowsy. This would never do. Oh, this would never do. Oh, this would never do. The senseless phrase reiterated itself in his brain. He looked at the dim outlines of his treasures in the hall, lit by the dim glow of the dying fire. He priced them, he revelled in them, he rubbed his hands and chuckled as he thought how skilfully he had got them for half—in some cases, for a quarter—of their value. With his brains and his money, there was nothing he couldn't do. And no one he couldn't do. That was a good one. He must tell Clay that. No, he'd better not. And there was that damn fool Cleaver pitting himself

against him. The noise broke out again above. He walked a little uncertainly to the foot of the stairs and called out in a thick voice :—

"Hush, you'll wake the baby!"

There was a shriek of laughter at that, and someone called out "Good old John," and Berwick felt very pleased with himself. He looked at his watch. Quarter to twelve. Well, old Cleaver had better hurry up. Serve him right if he shot him in the leg for keeping him waiting. What was that? Nothing. He sat down heavily on the settee, his revolver on his knees. He dozed. He woke with a start as the clock was striking twelve. Solemnly he stood up and counted the strokes. Sixsh—sheven—eight—nine—ten—eleven—— At the stroke of twelve they all came shrieking and shouting noisily down the stairs. Clay tripped and sprawled out into the middle of the lounge.

"Goo' old John! Goo' old John! Goo' old——"

The telephone bell rang. It whirred out its imperious summons dramatically into the uproar. There was a sudden silence.

"Cleaver," said Berwick. "Ha! ha! Thatch old Cleaver!"

He went to the telephone and dragged the receiver off its hook.

"Hullo! Hullo-lo-lo!"

"Cleaver speaking," said a voice the other end. It sounded a long way off. "Is that you, Berwick?"

"Yes. It's me. Thought better of it, en?"

"No—I've won."

"You've won. Won! Oh, go to hell."

"You said I could keep what I took, did you not?"

"Yes, but——" Surely he couldn't have dozed off and Cleaver got in without his noticing it?

"Well, I've taken it, and I'm keeping it—the most beautiful thing in your house——"

"Look here——" He spoke into space. He flung down the receiver and swung round. He rushed to the lounge. The bronze was still there. Then, suddenly, realization came upon him. Thrusting aside the bewildered spectators he rushed upstairs. He came to Marjorie's room. The door was locked. He put his shoulder to it. The room was empty, the bed unslept in.

"The most beautiful thing in the house—oh, my God!"

So all this enmity between them—all this was but an empty pretence. At last he knew why Cleaver had come to his house. Catching his foot in the carpet, he fell heavily and lay there drunkenly moaning.

ACROSTICS

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 219.
(The Third of the Series.)

THE Tropics; this is not a trap,
You'll find them clearly on the map.

1. An entertainment which, no doubt
Delights us, but it leaves us out.
2. Half limb, half lady; great in size;
Disastrous was the enterprise.
3. If in were in instead of out,
'Twould very soon be knocked about.
4. To turn a trance into this kind
Of movement easy work you'll find.
5. From Eastern river Western take,
Beheading same result will make.
6. Foreign affliction here will seem
Like stuff of which young lovers dream.
7. From sunny Spain it comes, to bubble
About the brim and end in trouble.
8. In plural it would be one book;
The door may shew it, if you look.
9. Daniel was this of part of it,
When with the lions made to sit.

W. J. B.

Answers to Acrostic No. 219 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on October 10th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else should be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 218.

1. T	aun	T
2. H	utc	H
3. E	quin	E
4. H	ubbu	B
5. A	ug	U
6. N	aple	S
7. D	awlis	H

NOTES.—Light 5. August. 7. Awl, dish.

RESULT OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH SERIES.

SEVERAL of the lights were very difficult, but none of them went unguessed. Full marks for the series was 33; Deen, Rivel, and Zyme head the list with 32, and win prizes of two guineas each; Alexis, Cyno, Lilcat, Peleus, Royal, Wahed, and Wylwyn come next with 31; Lilcat was a winner last time and is now ineligible, and the other six gain prizes of a guinea each.

Deen is Mr. J. Mulhall, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland; Rivel is Mr. A. C. Ruffhead, 10, Durham Road, Harrow, Middlesex; Zyme is Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 70, Tremadoc Road, Clapham, S.W.4.; Alexis is Mr. C. Godward, 4A, Christchurch Road, Surbiton Hill; Cyno is Mr. C. Norman, 28, Duke's Avenue, New Malden, Surrey; Peleus is Rev. P. Lewis, 49, South Road, Faversham, Kent; Royal is Mr. G. E. Syms, 342, Downham Way, Bromley, Kent; Wahed is Mr. W. N. Armstrong, 71, Hornsey Lane Gardens, N.6; Wylwyn is Mr. W. Winter, 20, Coombe Lane, Raynes Park, S.W.20.

None of these nine winners will be eligible for a prize in the forty-eighth series, now running.

CHILDHOOD'S MANY MOODS

Pictured by

MARCUS ADAMS

F.R.P.S.

A LITTLE girl was taken on a visit to a tall house in Dover Street, London. She went into a blue room which was a very satisfying and lovely room. Next to it there was a grey room which she liked even better. A china dog was on guard at the door of it, and the china dog watched, unblinkingly, a big black woolly cat. And the grey room, full of quiet and peace, was enchanting with golliwogs and other toys and bright bricks, and shining coloured glass and the jolliest of picture books.

She didn't care much about toys—picture books being dearer to her heart that year—so she selected a picture book and settled down to it. It turned out to be just right as a picture book. Then a grey-haired man in a brown overall spoke to her, and the little girl spoke to him, passing the time of day very pleasantly, because she knew at once, or very soon after, that he was that very rare thing among strangers—a really sensible grown-up who knew what was what. There was no nonsense about him.

So they went on chatting, and she was astonished when the time came to go. It was a pity. When she got home they asked her how she had liked being photographed. She was very surprised. She was unaware

This little lady refused to smile for the camera; but her exhibition of temper made a picture out of the ordinary.

that she had been photographed at all. She didn't know anything about that, and she said so.

And she added, "It was the loveliest party I've ever been to!"

The photograph was a beautiful piece of work, and the little story helps to explain why the child-photographs of Marcus Adams are such natural and fascinating things. He gives parties to his little sitters. A very great part of his job is to be friends with them.

The big camera he has specially designed for his work doesn't look like a camera at the

first glance. It is camouflaged with shelves which hold all manner of toys and things of interest to children. There are swans and frogs and goldfish, dolls' houses and trains and babies' rattles, plants and flowers, and glittering lumps of quartz. Below one laden shelf, recessed and unobtrusive, are the big lenses. Their mechanical attachments allow them a wonderful latitude of movement. They move like human eyes. They can instantly compass any angle to capture efficiently the swiftly changing expression or pose of a child.

Everything about the delightful blue and grey rooms, which are the Marcus Adams studios, is designed to secure the interest of one or other of a host of children possessing the most widely-varying interests. If a child sitter likes the blue room, it stays there. If another prefers to wander into the

The beauty and contentment of this fair-haired girl give an impression of English sunlight.

A delightful study of Viscountess Weymouth and her daughter, Lady Caroline Thynne.

grey room, there's nobody to stop it doing so. Marcus Adams, quietly watching, doesn't try to force the interest of a child in any of the objects the room displays. He waits for it to show.

Marcus Adams has a great faith in children, and he finds an extraordinary intelligence in the majority of his subjects. This intelligence is often of tremendous help to him in his work. You might fairly say that the children possessing it make their own portraits.

"If a picture of a child is only a crude, hard statement, I count it a failure," Mr. Adams says. "A successful picture, to be a work of art, must have the quality of a poem in it. For that result I have to draw out the child's mind—and, at the same time, project

what I myself want into that mind. It is difficult to explain, but I feel that I am building and building all the time I am talking to a child. Then I may have to demolish that building and start again. One of my small sitters understood this better than I can explain it—and provided me not only with an excellent picture, but with a brilliant example of intelligence.

" I had made a few exposures, but I knew that I was wrong. I wanted to change her expression altogether. I wanted to change her whole appearance. The only thing to try for was a completely fresh start.

" ' Now supposing you shake yourself like a hen,' I suggested, and her eyes lit up.

" ' Oh,' she said, without a second's hesitation. ' You mean rub it all out, don't you ? '

The rapt and happy expression has made this early portrait of Princess Elizabeth one of the most popular pictures ever taken of that well-beloved young lady.

" It was exactly what I did mean, of course.

" Many of my sitters are not easy at all, and it is sometimes very hard to get a picture that will satisfy me. I have to be constantly ready for changes of mood. Indeed, I have to anticipate them before they happen. Children can even be definitely hostile. Among their company was a small boy who seemed to have chosen the morning of his visit here to assert his independence. He simply refused to be taken. To prove to himself that he was right in this stubborn attitude, he began to be rude and disparaging about the whole business.

" ' Anybody can do what you're doing,' he declared, defiantly. ' *Anybody* can take photographs.'

" It gave me my cue. ' Of course they can,' I agreed at once, and he thought I was

High up in the world, John Julius appears to be listening intently to some very important news, whispered by his mother, Lady Diana Cooper.

"Well, whatever is he going to do next?"

congratulating him on having made a wonderful discovery. 'Let's have a change. You come and take me, will you?'

"So I moved over to pose for him, taking care not to hurry, and let him waste three or four plates. He was delighted, and exclaimed, triumphantly, 'There you are! I told you anybody could do it!'

"After that, having satisfied his self-respect, he was a perfectly willing and quiet subject.

"There was another boy who wasn't at all helpful. He wanted humouring, as they say.

"'Aren't you going to play with me?' I asked.

"'No.'

"'I should if I were you.'

"'No. Don't want to.' Very emphatic.

"'All right, then,' I said. 'I'm going to play with your mother.'

"And his mother and myself began

Remarkable qualities of grace and charm characterize this beautifully-posed camera study of three thoughtful children.

to be very interested in some books, and in the nearest toys, taking no notice of the rebel for a long five minutes. Then he felt badly out of it, and in another five minutes wanted to join the fun. Eventually, when I had taken him and it was time to go, he wanted badly to stay."

Many sitters do want to stay. They find the coloured rooms, and the toys, both fascinating. Sometimes they fall in love with some specially desirable toy, and march out of the studio with it. Marcus Adams never attempts to stop this understandable commandeering himself. If one of his assistants doesn't succeed in persuading the temporary owner to relinquish the treasure, on the way down to the street, fathers and mothers will send it back to Dover Street.

Marcus Adams is convinced that the modern child, compared with children of other days, is tremendously improved in all ways.

" The coddled boy or girl, thank goodness, is almost extinct. And I honestly think that very few children of twenty years ago would have shown anything like the mental promise that most children show to-day. The modern child thinks for itself. It has a bright and happy outlook. I find many of them are brilliant. It's that generally happy outlook, I think, which is the most interesting and promising attribute of the modern child."

One of the happiest of the children who play games in Marcus Adams's studio is little Princess Elizabeth, and he thinks she is his most ideal sitter. After her greeting, " How are you, Marcus Adams ? "—for she invariably gives him his full name—she takes charge of the whole place, going through the order book and spelling out the names, and holding imaginary conversations on the telephone. In these games, of course, Marcus Adams must join in.

" You want to speak to Marcus Adams ? " she said once, after holding a long conversation with a mythical lady at the other end. " Oh, yes, he's here."

And Mr. Adams had to chat volubly into the 'phone for a long time before she was satisfied.

SINNERS BEWARE!—No. 7

MADEMOISELLE ANNA DISAPPEARS

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by JACK M. FAULKS

"'TIS a pleasant strip of land, though small," Paddy Collins, the wanderer, meditated, gazing out of the window of his friend's villa at La Turbie. "The whisky is agreeable, and the cost of living moderate. I'm thinking of taking up my abode in your vicinity, Peter."

Peter Hames shook his head.

"You are too restless, Paddy," he observed. "Leaving out the gambling, which you don't care much about, there's not enough here to interest you."

"God bless my soul!" the Irishman replied. "Four or five pretty good rows, two broken heads, a shot on my shoulder blade, a dozen very near drunks, and a lovely cousin found in the bosom of the mountains. What are you talking about, man? It's a place after God's own heart."

"You're luckier than me," was his friend's gloomy comment.

Paddy Collins rose from his seat in the studio, and came across to the easel.

"You spend too much of your time, Peter, slapping paint on them old canvases. You're a good night bird all right when there's something calling, but that's all there is to you. You don't need to paint for your living, lad. You don't help anyone else in life by spoiling good honest canvas like that. Come down with me now to the centre of the world, and we'll take a couple of dry ones with Francis."

Peter Hames knocked out his pipe.

"You're not a flatterer, old chap," he observed.

"Though I've the tongue of an Irishman, I'm a truthful man," Paddy Collins avowed. "Quit painting, lad. Let's go and see the town."

"Against my will, I am persuaded," was the regretful reply. "Wait until I take off this smock, and I'm with you."

They drove down to the Royalty Bar and, being early, found a table out in the sunshine. The Irishman leaned across towards his friend.

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"Peter," he said, "you mind the little lass up in the mountains there?"

"I do indeed."

"Well, cousin or no cousin, I'm going to marry her. We're going to build up that farm into something worth while, spend a month or two a year there, and when we go away to jog round a bit, we'll leave it in charge of her father. What do you think of that for a scheme?"

"You're a lucky man, Paddy," his companion declared.

"And what's the matter with you that you can't find a girl of your own?" Paddy Collins demanded. "There's many of them about in these parts, and one I have seen——"

"That'll do, Paddy, old chap," his friend begged.

Just then a waiter hurried out from the closed part of the bar.

"There's a lady who desires to speak with monsieur upon the telephone," he said, addressing Peter.

The latter hastened in, picked up the receiver, announced himself, and listened. The voice which answered him was the voice of a stranger.

"It is Monsieur Peter Hames?"

"Speaking."

"I speak for Mademoiselle Christian. She left word that I was to ring you up at your villa, at the Hotel de Paris, the Royalty Bar, and afterwards at the Café de Paris. Mademoiselle desires that you come to her at once."

"Certainly," Peter Hames agreed. "Where is she?"

The woman's tone became a little troubled.

"But monsieur—monsieur would know that."

"How the mischief could I know?" was the anxious rejoinder. "I have not seen Miss Christian for a week. If you are ringing up for her, you must know where she is. Tell me, and I will go there immediately."

The woman's voice was still uneasy.

"Mademoiselle never allows her whereabouts to be spoken of, but one would imagine that monsieur knows where she spends much of the latter part of the night——"

"Good God!" Peter Hames exclaimed. "Do you mean the——"

"Monsieur is probably right," the voice interrupted. "Monsieur will search for mademoiselle there?"

"I should say so," he replied, ringing off.

He strode out to where his friend was waiting for him.

"Gone all thoughts of our peaceful gossip, I'm afraid, Paddy," he sighed. "Come along. Have you got a stout heart in you this morning?"

"Aye, and a fist that's spoiling for a bit of work," Paddy Collins declared, surreptitiously downing the gin and tonic which the waiter had brought. "Drink your own, Peter. You'll be none the worse man for it."

But Peter Hames had other thoughts. He was already in his car.

"Is it a long way we're going?" his friend inquired, as he settled himself down by his side.

"Less than half a mile. It's to the little night café at Beausoleil."

"Is it trouble we'll be finding there?" Paddy asked, hopefully.

"I can't tell you anything," was the dazed reply. "I only know that a young woman I'm interested in was probably there last night, and hasn't returned. I just heard from her maid."

PETER HAMES drove without concealment to the front of the café. The door was inhospitably closed, but it yielded to firm treatment. A sleepy-eyed youth in blue overalls was making languid efforts to tidy up the place.

"Where's John?" Peter Hames demanded.

"Gone," was the brusque reply. "I'm the new barman."

"And Madame Lapouge, the patronne, where's she?"

"Gone, too. Everyone's gone."

"Where's the patron?"

"Gone out to get his coffee. If you want a drink, I'll give you one. We're not ready for customers yet."

"Was there a young lady here last night—Mademoiselle Anna?"

The barman shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know?" he asked. "My first evening. There may have been."

Peter Hames took hold of the youth by the back of his shirt, and the seat of his trousers, and lifted him out of the way.

"I'm going to search this place," he announced.

The young man flung his broom at this unpleasant visitor, and escaped into the back premises. They could hear him shouting in patois. Almost simultaneously, a familiar figure entered from the back door of the place. Coatless and unshaven, he presented a very different appearance, but it was undoubtedly M. le Marquis de Verrais, sometimes known as François Legrande, who confronted them.

"What do you want, making a disturbance in my café at this hour of the morning?" he asked, with an angry flash of his white teeth.

Peter Hames stared at the speaker, and that vague sense of apprehension which had

"Mademoiselle Anna," said Peter, "the Sergeant is here to know whether you have been detained in this place against your will."

been with him since the ringing of the telephone, suddenly deepened.

"Since when has it been your café?" he questioned.

"The papers were signed yesterday, if you must know. It is my café, and I am free to serve whom I please. I don't wish for anything to do with you, or your friends. Be so good as to leave without disturbance."

"On the contrary," Peter Hames told him, fiercely, "I am going to search every inch of your premises from cellar to attic."

"Search my premises, indeed! For what?"

"Stand out of the way!" Peter ordered. "The last time I knocked you down on the Corniche Road—rather a surprise, wasn't it?—I hurt you a little more than you expected. This time, it may take you a little longer to get over it."

Legrande's fingers slipped into his waistcoat, and he produced not a weapon, but a whistle. He blew it long and furiously.

"That is for the police," he mocked them. "Now we shall see whether they will allow strangers tramping through my premises."

"Not quite strangers, Monsieur le Marquis," Peter Hames reminded him.

"I've never broken the law, anyhow," the other replied. "I've never stolen pocket-books. We'll see what the police have to say about your breaking into an honest man's café at this hour of the morning."

"If there is really a chance of the police arriving," Peter Hames observed, "so much the better. If they do not arrive, I shall, as I threatened you, search the place."

LEGRANDE held out his hand, pointing towards the door in a triumphant gesture. With official bearing, but very unofficial haste, a sergeant of police, attended by a gendarme, was crossing the threshold. The two men arrived just in time to save Legrande's skin, for Paddy Collins was finding the affair hang fire, and had decided that it was time for action. Legrande swaggered forward.

"Monsieur le Sergeant," he complained, "these two men—I do not know them—they are not clients of mine—arrived this morning, assaulted my barman, and announced their intention of breaking open my doors, and searching every room of the house. They should be removed at once. I charge them with assault. It is a hard thing for an honest man to have his premises entered in this fashion."

"What have you to say about this, monsieur?" the Sergeant demanded, turning towards Peter, and there was something in his tone and manner which betrayed easily enough the fact that his sympathies were already enlisted.

"A young woman, who is accustomed to spend an hour or so here several nights a week," Peter Hames recounted, "was here last night, and has not returned to her home. I happen to know that this fellow Legrande, who tells me he has purchased this café, besides being a thorough scamp, has a grudge against the young woman. I admit I told him that I intended to search the place to look for her. Since you are here, Sergeant, you will perhaps spare me the trouble."

The Sergeant looked at him sternly.

"What reasons have you, monsieur, for believing that the young woman is on these premises?" he asked.

"I received a telephone message asking that I should come to her assistance," he replied.

"This is an absurdity," Legrande declared. "As a matter of fact, last night was my opening one. We had no young women in. The clients were all friends of mine desiring to drink a glass of wine with me and to wish good fortune to the house. Jean, were there any young ladies in this place last night?"

"Not one, sir," the boy replied.

The Sergeant closed his book.

"You're making a mistake, sir," he declared, addressing Peter Hames. "Monsieur Legrande is, so far as we know, an honest man, and there is no evidence whatsoever making it necessary for us to search his premises."

Peter Hames looked the man steadily in the face.

"Listen, Sergeant," he said, "I am fairly well known in the Principality. Do I look like a person who would come here and make these charges without some foundation? What pleasure or profit could it be to me to have the apartments of Monsieur Legrande searched?"

The man avoided his eyes.

"Monsieur will be so good as to depart, and take his friend with him," he insisted.

Peter Hames sighed, as he produced his pocket-book.

"No, Sergeant," he said, gently, "you need not fear or hope that I am about to offer you a bribe. Be so good as to glance at this card."

He passed it across. The Sergeant glanced at it at first superciliously, started as he read the name, and collapsed as he read the few lines of writing. He handed it back, and saluted.

"Monsieur is at liberty to search the premises," he announced. "My gendarme and I are at your disposal."

"What?" Legrande scowled. "Sergeant, what is this?"

The Sergeant extended his hands.

"I believe you to be an honest man, Monsieur Legrande," he said. "My

"I hate spies," said Fifine. "Monsieur Paddy, I love you, but I hate spies."

sympathy is with you, but monsieur has a card there which permits him special licence in the Principality, and by courtesy in the immediate neighbourhood I cannot interfere."

Legrande stood for a moment, thinking fiercely.

"Stop!" he cried. "It was a young woman for whom monsieur was inquiring? There was one here last night, for a very short time. She arrived drunk, and asked leave to lie down upstairs. I had forgotten her. It is perhaps the young woman of whom monsieur is in search. Wait!"

He hurried out of the place. Peter Hames made a movement as though to follow him. The sergeant of police saluted.

"It is as monsieur wishes," he admitted,

respectfully, "yet one feels that Monsieur Legrande should have a chance to prove the truth of his words. If mademoiselle arrives, and has a charge to make, here am I to receive it."

Peter Hames assented reluctantly

"Three minutes," he conceded. "No longer than that."

"It is for monsieur to decide," was the suave reply.

In less than three minutes Peter Hames, at any rate, had the surprise of his life. There was the sound of the banging of a door, light footsteps outside, and, through the back entrance to the bar, a cigarette in her long tube, a queer little smile upon her lips, came Mademoiselle Anna. She showed no signs of distress or disturbance of any sort. Her clothes were neatly brushed, and her *toute ensemble* as usual immaculate. She swung across the room towards him.

"But what a commotion!" she exclaimed. "The police, too!"

"Is this the young person?" the Sergeant asked Peter Hames.

The latter nodded.

"Mademoiselle Anna," he went on, turning towards her, "the Sergeant is here to know if you have any complaints—in plain words, whether you have been detained in this place against your will?"

Monsieur Legrande, who had followed softly down the stairs, stood irresolute by the side of the counter. Mademoiselle knocked the ash from her cigarette.

"Complaints?" she repeated. "What complaints should I have? I stayed here too late last night, and fell asleep."

Peter was watching Legrande's face. His expression of fear had changed at first into one of blank bewilderment; afterwards to one of relief. The Sergeant's embarrassed disquietude disappeared as though by magic. He drew himself up once more.

"Monsieur perceives," he pointed out, ingratiatingly, "that affairs were not so bad as he supposed. Monsieur Legrande, I am convinced, is incapable of committing an illegal act."

Mademoiselle Anna tossed away her cigarette. As she stood there, in the full glare of the morning sunshine, Peter Hames marvelled more than ever at her amazing make-up. There was scarcely even a suggestion of Sybil Christian either in her features or colouring.

"Oh, la la!" she exclaimed. "I want my lunch! *Bon jour*, Monsieur Legrande. My two friends, since you are here, you will accompany me, I trust?"

They left the place together. Mademoiselle Anna, walking between them, took an arm of each, and led them a little way up the street. As soon as they were out of hearing of the café, she paused, and summoned a passing carriage.

"Remain mystified until one o'clock, dear friends," she begged. "Lunch with me then at the Pomme d'Or."

She sprang lightly into the vehicle, waved her hand with a gesture half impudent, half friendly, and drove away—Mademoiselle Anna at midday as perfect of her type as at midnight.

THE POMME D'OR, which was truly French, was not prepared to offer cocktails, but over their apéritif, served whilst the lunch which Sybil Christian had ordered, was prepared, she told her story.

"You knew, of course," she began, "that up till yesterday the Café Régal belonged to me?"

"So I understood," Peter Hames admitted.

"Madame Lapouge was the ostensible owner. A few days ago, she told me that she had had an offer for the place. It has been of little use to me since we ran it respectably, as all the gamins of the neighbourhood stay away. I wasn't keen to sell, however, until she divulged the name of the would-be purchaser. Legrande, if you please, with Fifine living in the place as the wife of the patron! I didn't hesitate for a minute. I told her to sell, with a proviso that the room on the first floor, where I have the microphone and the cupboard, was reserved entirely for my use. Madame Lapouge told Legrande that I had taken it for a year, and paid for it in advance. He believes that I wish it for resting in, to put my clothes in, or as a rendezvous——"

"Stop!" Peter Hames interrupted. "Are you telling me that Legrande has not recognized you?"

"That is the point of the whole thing," Sybil explained. "He suspects I'm a spy of some sort, but he doesn't know for whom, and he actually has not connected me in any way with Sybil Christian; neither, although she is vaguely suspicious, has Fifine, who now patronizes me. Last night, I knew that Legrande meant to entertain a few of his criminal friends in the salon. I pretended a headache and went up to my room to lie down for a time. Whilst I was there I heard the handle turn, but I had had brass bolts fitted to stop any enterprises of that sort, and to prevent anyone coming in whilst I was using the microphone. Half an hour later I heard the key, which I had foolishly left in the lock on the outside, turn, and I knew that I was locked in."

"But how did you telephone?" Peter Hames marvelled.

" Wait ! " she begged. " I am convinced that when Legrande locked me in, he thought that I was probably asleep, and that, at any rate, he was making sure of me. Half-a-dozen men had a little meeting in the salon, and most of what they said I heard. That's another story. I'm only explaining last night for the present. It was quite worth waiting for, quite worth listening to. I feel sure that Legrande really forgot to turn the key again ; forgot that I was there, locked in. This morning I withdrew the bolts, slept for a little time, and waited. Soon after you arrived, I suppose, I heard the key turn. Then I came out."

Peter Hames held his head for a moment.

" What about the telephone ? " he asked.

" That was a blunder," she admitted. " Some time ago, I told Christine, my maid, if ever I should fail to return, to telephone to you. I felt safer like that, for, as you know, queer things have happened at the Café Régal. I didn't come home ; hence your telephone message, which, in the circumstances, was unfortunate."

" Then really," Peter Hames observed, dolefully, " you didn't send for us and you were in no need of help."

I don't think so," she meditated. " I have kept my room locked up all the time. The lock came to me from Paris, and I am perfectly certain the key could not be copied, so my wardrobe, which contains the microphone, can never have been examined. The proof of that is the conversation I heard last night. You can understand my attitude this morning now. I want to keep my position at the Café. It was a bad place in old Madame's time. It seems to me, from what I heard, that it will be a much worse place under Legrande."

Luncheon was a somewhat silent meal, and immediately afterwards Paddy Collins hurried off to meet his cousin from the mountains.

" Why so depressed ? " Sybil asked her remaining guest.

" Let me drive you up to the hills, well away from this place," he begged, " and I'll tell you."

" I should love it," she assented. " Let's ask for the bill and go at once."

In a side road, which was little more than a cart track across a field, in the shadow of a small plantation of pines, Peter Hames brought his car to a standstill, and answered his companion's question.

" I am depressed," he said, deliberately, " because I hate the life you are living—this double life of social stunts and sordid adventures."

" I've had some fun out of it," she reminded him. " So have you."

" Let it go at that," he begged. " One can't keep on having all the luck. And I'm all the more depressed," he went on, " because I have a queer presentiment about the Café Régal. You may be right ; they may be only mildly suspicious about you. I'm not so sure."

" If they had meant mischief," she pointed out, " they had plenty of time between four o'clock, when the meeting was over, and half-past seven."

" All the same," Peter rejoined, " Legrande swore that there was no one in the place when I came for you, and nothing would induce him to let me make a search. It was only the coming of the police that made him remember you and let you out."

She lit a cigarette, and spoke thoughtfully.

" Peter," she announced, " I'll make a bargain with you. I'll listen in once more to the meeting to-night, and that shall be the end. If there's an adventure in what I hear it shall be our last."

He took her hand.

" Agreed," he promised.

MADEMOISELLE ANNA, from her stool at the end of the counter that night, watched them slip out of the room one by one—these furtive-looking men, whom she had seen enter by twos and threes. Very few of them were Monégasques, she had noticed, most of them from Nice or Marseilles, unpleasant-looking in some nameless way, sinister in their silence, and the lack of good fellowship with which they had met and drunk. The " Three Musketeers " who had been amongst the first arrivals, were quarrelling still about the price of a bottle of brandy which they had bought. When they, too, joined the little procession which mounted the stairs, the café was almost empty. She glanced at the little platinum and diamond wrist-watch which, as a rule, she kept well concealed. Then she, too, slipped out by that back door, climbed the stairs, unlocked the door of her room and drew the bolts, locked it again from the inside, made her way into what seemed to be a little wardrobe in the corner, inserted another key and let herself into its recesses. . . .

It seemed to her that the instrument had never been clearer. She heard even the muttered exclamations, the gurgling of wine poured into glasses, the demand from a stranger, who had apparently arrived that day from Marseilles, as to their plans. Then, more distinctly than anything, she heard Legrande speak. He had a full, oily voice, suave yet penetrating. To-night, for the first time, it inspired her with a vague sense of fear. She felt her heart beat in the darkness of the little cubicle. She was suddenly

terrified, full of keen regret that she had ordered Peter Hames to stay away. The fingers which held the instrument to her ear were trembling. A fit of nerves—most unexpected visitation—was playing havoc with her. She stepped back into the room. Almost she made up her mind to withdraw the bolts, unlock the door, and fly. Then, as unexpectedly as the fit had come upon her it passed. She was ashamed of her momentary cowardice, alert and confident as ever. She stepped back to her hiding place and raised the phone once more to her ears. Legrande was still speaking, and there were little murmurs of satisfaction from the men who were listening to him.

Paris, Marseilles, London, New York, Chicago, not to mention any other cities," he said, " have their criminal life organized. Crime is a profession like the others. It is only successful when worked by what the Americans call the ' gang ' system, which is to say, co-operation Monte Carlo and Nice have been neglected as too small a field. I dispute that. I contend that there is more money coming and going between these two towns than any other territory of the same size in the world. It is our duty to see that more of it stays. That is why I have asked all you brave fellows who are known to be of an adventurous turn of mind to come together."

There were muttered exclamations and applause. Then something a little more menacing crept into Legrande's voice.

" Before we start serious operations," he continued, " there are one or two little affairs to be dealt with. We have been annoyed here—indeed, one of my own operations has been interfered with by the meddling of amateurs. Amateurs in our line of business I detest," Legrande went on, more slowly. " The particular little group in this vicinity must be treated firmly. One of them is an American painter, another a thick-headed Irishman, and a third a young woman—a very simple creature who belongs to good people, but comes here nearly every night eavesdropping, and posing in the bar. Imagine the folly of thinking that she could do this with people like myself about, without being discovered! A fatuous young

As they drew near they saw in front of her the revolver from which the smoke was still curling upwards.

lady, my friends, but one who has earned the punishment that is coming to her."

The little ebony instrument nearly dropped from Sybil's nerveless fingers. Cold horror struck into her heart. Almost, it seemed that she could see the little circle of men with their fierce and ribald whispers, see Legrande crouching there, his red lips parted, a grin of satisfaction upon his face. After all, she, who had thought herself so clever, was the one who had been fooled. Her first impulse was escape, swift and speedy. She dashed to the door. The bolts still held bravely. She drew them back. Then she fitted in her key, and her heart sank. The lock had been tampered with. From her

side, at any rate, there was no way of turning it. Well, it was to have been expected. She fled back again to her place and picked up the instrument.

"As for the Irishman," Legrande was saying, "he is disposed of for to-night. Fifine has taken him to Nice. She has just telephoned from the Savoy Bar there that he is hopelessly drunk. There remains mademoiselle, and with her I propose to deal."

It was one of the "Three Musketeers" who spoke. Sybil recognized his voice.

"One understands . . . the English world . . well placed, not one of us. Is it not possible that trouble might come if our friend Legrande should treat her as she deserves?"

"There will be no trouble," Legrande said, calmly. She has aped the cocotte long enough. She has cut herself adrift from her people with this night life. She has her own bedroom here. No one can deny it. For what purpose? Who can do harm to such a person! What complaints from a young woman living such a life would receive attention? She has destroyed herself. I will deal with her."

"And afterwards?" someone ventured.

"She will be content," Legrande replied. "She hankers after this life. She shall have it. We will make it impossible for her to return to the other."

"And the American?"

"Our sergeant of police, who is with us, carries always a loaded revolver," he confided. "I myself can deal with six men's lives in six seconds. There is nothing to fear. The American will come after her. He will get what he deserves. The Irishman will be too drunk to do anything for days. When he is sober there will be nothing left for him to do. When these people are disposed of I will unfold the great scheme. I am proposing a coup which, if successful—and it will be successful with these damned interlopers out of the way—will bring us in between two and three million francs. First of all, I intend to deal with Mademoiselle Anna. You will excuse me, gentlemen, for, shall we say, half an hour? The champagne and brandy are on the sideboard at your disposal. Go down, one of you, if there is something else needed. Let no one come up."

There was a little chorus of what seemed to Sybil, in those swooning moments, the lewd exultation of a chorus of satyrs. Then there were footsteps outside—heavy, deliberate footsteps, the click of a key fitted into the lock on the other side of the door.

PADDY COLLINS was, or appeared to be, gloriously and magnificently drunk. He sat in an easy-chair at a famous bar in Nice, his arm around Fifine, who sat in an adjacent one, a bottle of whisky, a tumbler, and a bottle of perrier on his own small table, a bottle of champagne in front of Fifine, for, drunk or sober, there was one principle about Paddy Collins which he never altered—"one night: one drink"—and it was Paddy's night for whisky.

"I'm thinking," he suggested, "it's time we were making for Monte Carlo."

She bent over him and laughed, patting his cheek and drawing him a little nearer to her. The bar was empty, for most of the people were dancing in the adjacent room.

"We will not go back," she whispered. "It will serve François right. He sends me out to take care of you whilst he takes for himself another. He is a beast. We will stay here. We will go anywhere you like. I have kept my word. I brought you away. Very well, I will stay with you. You shall be my man, Monsieur Paddy Collins. You are a very fine man. I like you much."

Fifine was not singularly observant, and she also was very nearly drunk. She did not notice the sudden stiffening of every muscle in her companion's body.

"Ho ho!" he exclaimed. "So Monsieur Legrande has plans to-night!"

"It serves that silly little fool right," Fifine declared, caressing him more ardently. "She plays at being a cocotte. Let her become one. François will break her. She will not be the first, and it serves her right. She spies. I hate spies. Monsieur Paddy, I love you, but I hate spies."

"So do I—like hell," Paddy Collins agreed, lumbering to his feet.

"Where are you going?"

"Not far from you, sweetheart," he answered, amorously.

He gulped down the rest of his tumblerful of whisky and staggered across the room. She leaned back and laughed. She was earning her money and, after all, it was not so bad. He was a fine figure of a man, this Irishman. She sat and waited for his return—and waited—and waited.

Into the blackness of the night Paddy Collins stumbled, and for a moment things were blurred for him. The pavements seemed to rise. People stared curiously. Then he set his teeth, drew himself up, stiffened every muscle, and became a man again. In Peter Hames's borrowed car he glided off into the Promenade des Anglais, narrowly escaped overturning two protesting gendarmes, and flashed like a streak around the corner, past the harbour, into the Middle Corniche. He knew Peter Hames's car, and he knew that bottom road! A quarter of an hour, he said to himself, as he flung in his fourth speed at the top of the hill.

Horns were blown at him, shouts came from the few pedestrians. What did Paddy care? He was out to break records, the vision of that dirty little café in his mind, the girl his friend loved always calling, calling. Winds rushed by, pebbles leaped into the air, round some corners he skidded madly, but the car held the road and Paddy Collins held the wheel. It was the drive of a lifetime, and he paused, panting, at last, with shrieking of brakes and blasting of horn before the villa on the hillside at La Turbie. Peter Hames was at the door before he reached it.

"Your gun, Peter!" Paddy shouted. "We've been fooled. Break your promise, man, and come, or leave me to face it alone."

They were in the car together. The last part of the rush came.

"They fooled us, Peter," the Irishman repeated, keeping those stern grey eyes of his fixed upon the road, and his hands gripping the wheel until the veins stood out like whipcord. "Sybil put you on your honour. They sent me off with the little Fifine to Nice. These blasted women! They always blab. A bottle or two of wine in her, and out it came. Sybil never bluffed them. They knew. They're for her to-night. They've got a plan for us to-morrow."

They sat, face level to face, eyes set, nerves tense, blood on fire, but the fight of all the ages never came, for when they flung open the door of the Café Régal, Mademoiselle Anna was sitting on her accustomed stool, smoking a cigarette from her long holder. No other soul was in the place. She looked round, and remained staring at them. As they drew near they saw in front of her the revolver from which the smoke was still curling upwards.

"Paddy!" she exclaimed. "Peter! You, after all! How did you know!"

"Paddy told me," he cried. "Is all well with you, Sybil?"

She nodded.

"I killed him," she confessed. "I had to. The others were afraid when they knew. They skulked away like rats."

Not a sound in the place, no barman in the bar, emptiness and solitude everywhere. They took her out and helped her into the car. Only one movement she made of her own accord. She took the revolver by the barrel and flung it into the road.

"I had to kill him," she moaned. "Peter, it was my fault. I should have listened to you."

THEY were over the frontier by eight o'clock, with a visa on their passports which brought them many salutations. They raced away into Italy. Paddy Collins, from the dickey, leaned over.

"Peter, my lad," he confided, "this is a strange country to me. Do you know of a place nearby where perhaps a bottle of whisky might be bought?"

"I'm looking for a place with an English chaplain," Peter Hames replied.

THE COAST OF DIAMONDS

By

LAWRENCE G. GREEN

Illustrated by MACKINLAY

IN the waterfront taverns of Cape Town, where men in poor clothes gather to talk wistfully of riches, you hear yarns of the Coast of Diamonds. Some are true yarns. These hard men, weathered by sea and wind and rain, have sailed along stretches of the African coast where the raw stuff which makes millionaires lies untouched in the wastes of sand. It is simply a matter of knowing where to look.

Kernwood, the prospector, was approaching that unpleasant state when he could not spend a pound without counting the rest of his money to see how much remained. He flicked the notes as he paid for the fierce Cape brandy—ten, fifteen, twenty pounds. All that he had to show for twenty years of struggle in corners of Africa where water is sometimes more precious than the crystals for which men risk their lives. Just those few notes, and his memories—which he would not have sold for all the diamonds of De Beers—and a faith in future luck which was almost pathetic when you considered how luck had missed him in the past.

Life under the sun marks wandering men in different ways. It had dried Kernwood's whole body, browned his face, turned his dark hair grey. He was as tough as the dried meat of the veldt—you could have placed him in a second as a man of the open spaces. And while you were glancing at him, Kernwood would have formed his opinion of you; nine times out of ten he would have been right.

"Skol!" said Kernwood, giving the Norse toast in honour of his companions. The three sailors lifted their glasses, gulped the strong brandy as others might drink beer, without a shiver. They were fair as only the Norwegians can be, with blue and steady eyes, built like Vikings—men you could rely upon in a venture on land or sea. And Kernwood needed them now. With his knowledge and their little ship, he could gamble with luck once more, on that wild coast where only the sea birds are at home; where the bones of prospectors not so fortunate as Kernwood lie whitening in the sand.

"I'll tell you the name of the spot if you decide to tackle the job," Kernwood was saying. "You know the Sperrgebiet in the old German territory north of the Orange River—the coast where diamond poaching is punished with six months in jail? Well, there are still one or two stretches of that country which are not prohibited. Lonely

capes and bays, so far from any civilized outpost that the Government has not worried about proclaiming them. You can't reach them overland—not without camels and wagons to carry water, and natives. But with your ship we could make the bay I have in mind in about four days from Cape Town. Remember, I have nothing to gain by taking you off on a fool's errand—and I'll back my luck with this wad of notes. Take the money, buy petrol and stores, and I'll give you even shares in anything we find."

MORCH GUNDERSSEN, the skipper, turned to the others. "Vel, Hansen? Do ve stop catching fish that no one buys, and go seeking diamonds?"

Olav Hansen, a huge man with a blond moustache, opened his mouth to speak only about half-a-dozen times a day. The engine kept him occupied at sea; and he could think as he worked, and form sound judgments, without chattering. Now he finished his drink and gave a brief, decisive answer. "Skipper, it iss good that ve go north after those diamonds."

Young Lars Olsen, the mate, who looked forward to a letter from a girl in Oslo every week, nodded agreement eagerly. "Diamonds, yes—it will be a fine change from the fishing." Kernwood had picked his partners wisely. He liked a straight deal, too, and there are so many twists and surprises in the game of prospecting—especially when the stones have been found. These men could be trusted. They were not afraid of a gamble; and plainly they had the nerve which is just as essential on the desert coast of South-West Africa as it is round the tables of Monte Carlo.

"Ve go now on board the *Albatross*, I think, mister, and you can show us this place on the chart," suggested Gunderssen.

The *Albatross* was Gunderssen's cutter. Kernwood knew enough of small craft to see that she was fit for the task—this beamy, double-ended cutter of the Norwegian pilot type. Her tanned sails would drive her north before the south-east wind, and the powerful engine would bring her back.

"Ve sailed her out from Norway," said Lars Olsen, proudly. "She's carried fish and guano and sealskins—and now, perhaps, a cargo of diamonds, eh?"

"With luck, yes," answered Kernwood. He ran his finger down the rough coastline indicated on the chart. "Here is the Orange River, you see, and here the Sperrgebiet begins. Then we come to Roast Beef Island, and just to the north of that—but not marked on the chart—is Whale Bay. Put me on shore at Whale Bay with pick, shovel, and sieve, and I think I can do the rest. It's nobody's property, and the diamonds should be there."

"How did you hear of this place?" asked Gunderssen, frankly.

"I was in Luderitzbucht in August, 1914," Kernwood replied. "There I met a German prospector—a good fellow, too, a man I had known years before in Kimberley. He had been to Whale Bay with a partner, and he was mad about the place—told wonderful stories of the diamonds, blue diamonds lying almost on the surface. They were so fine, in fact, that this German and his partner stayed a day or so too long—their donkeys died of thirst on the way back, and the men only just staggered back into Luderitz alive. The partner carried the diamonds—and cleared with them, robbed his friend. We were going back for more when the War broke out. I was a prisoner for a few months, until the German forces surrendered. My friend, the prospector, was killed in action; and so, I believe, was his thieving partner. And I've never had the chance of going to Whale Bay since the end of the War—something else always came along. As I say, it's dangerous to travel overland—and difficult to avoid suspicion with all these new restrictions on prospecting. But it should be easy enough by sea."

Gunderssen nodded slowly.

"Governments and oder people are always poking their noses into little enterprises like this," he murmured. "Ve say nothing. When ve come back I shall report my ship blown avay from der fishing grounds by gales."

They sailed with a stiff sou'easter astern; boldly the little *Albatross* rode the steep seas and reeled off the knots. Gunderssen chuckled as he picked up mark after mark along the coast on the long run north. Nearing Port Nolloth, he set a course that would take the cutter over the horizon, away from curious eyes.

One day the deep blue of the sea changed to light green. "That is where the Orange River runs in," announced Gunderssen, and stood in towards the land again. It was a coast of brown sandhills, one stretch exactly like the last, rainless, surf-beaten, offering nothing that humanity could desire—except the promise of diamonds. Then they sighted the little group of bird islands and rocks—given by some hard-case shipmaster the unlikely name of Roast Beef Islands.

"That will be Whale Bay," said Kernwood, pointing eagerly to a slight indentation in the coast to the north'ard. He was feeling the itch of the prospector—that queer influence which sends men off along perilous trails, again and again, always with the feeling that El Dorado lies ahead. A

Sanderson, the travelling under arrest," scene in a moment.

feeling strong enough to stand shock after shock of disappointment.

"They should not haf called that place a bay," said Gunderssen, gravely. "There ve cannot anchor now—not with this sea running. And I could not send a boat ashore."

Kernwood chafed at the delay; but they had to stream out the sea anchor and wait.

"A treacherous coast, this one," Gunderssen told them. "Fog or heavy veather all der time."

"And diamonds," put in the cheerful Lars Olsen. "To-morrow morning, skipper, I will put Mister Kernwood on the beach with food and water and spades. You will see—to-morrow morning will be all right. Diamonds!"

Dawn showed a calm sea. They anchored and left Hansen in charge of the ship; for he alone displayed no trace of the prospecting fever. A man with a hobby, was Hansen. He had a little crate of pigeons on board, and he would sit staring at them lovingly for hours, feeding them, ruffling their feathers. He was perfectly content with his birds—let the others grovel in the sand after precious stones.

The others found it a fascinating business. Even Kernwood, after twenty years of weary seeking, had not lost the thrill of digging in a new area. Kernwood, who had the knowledge and a highly-developed instinct, was the first to shout. He blew the fine grains of yellow sand off it as Gunderssen and Olsen came rushing up. It lay there in his palm, moving up and down as he guessed the weight.

"Blue-white—a fine colour—and about five carats," said Kernwood. "Worth going all the way to Europe to sell. But we'll have a parcel before we have finished here."

They had a parcel at the end of that day's digging which Kernwood valued at five thousand pounds.

"Even in a depressed market they'll fetch that," he declared. "Those blue-white stones are always in demand in New York."

There were stones with a reddish tinge, too—an imperfection which connoisseurs love. And larger stones with flaws, and smaller ones that seemed perfect. "They'll be a lovely sight when they're cut," said

magistrate, took in the
" Please consider yourselves
he said.

Kernwood. He put them all in a tobacco bag and flung them carelessly into a locker in the cabin. He knew his companions.

The weather held, and they were at work again early. The burning sun, the all-pervading grit that filled aching eyes, the hot sand beneath—these were forgotten as the hours passed, each hour rewarding them with diamonds large or small. Kernwood had often heard of fabulously rich " pockets " in the midst of huge spaces where a man might search for a lifetime and find nothing. One such " pocket," just south of the Orange River, had been seized by the South African Government immediately after the discovery—and it had yielded millions. Here, it seemed, was another of these mysterious hoards of the ages. The task of gutting it cast a spell over them, so that every detail of their surroundings vanished save the sand under their eyes. They knew that their days in this desolate treasure chest were limited. A gale might mean a week or more of waiting off-shore for another chance. Time meant diamonds, and they did not waste a minute.

That was why they did not observe the great cloud which came rushing over the desert to engulf them. Not a rain cloud—for water does not fall once in ten years on this coast. It was a dust cloud, a stinging rain of fine sand driven by the wind at fifty miles an hour. While it raged they could do nothing but lie on their faces, blinded and struggling for breath. They longed to crawl to the water barrel and wash the sand out of their tortured throats. Even that was impossible ; but the desire was so keen that for the moment they forgot the diamonds.

When the dark shadow over the sun vanished suddenly and the storm passed up the coast they saw that the sea had risen. Breakers lashed the beach where they had left their dinghy. The *Albatross* was tugging at her cable ; and they knew it would not be long before they would have to run for open sea. It was while they were standing beside the dinghy—reluctant to leave a fortune ungathered, yet afraid to wait—that Mr. William Sanderson came swaying over the skyline on his camel.

Mr. Sanderson, travelling magistrate, separated from his police patrol during the

dust storm, took in the scene in a moment. Spades and sieves told the story. He shook his head sorrowfully.

"Please consider yourselves under arrest," he said.

"Arrest?" queried Kernwood. "This is nobody's ground, surely?"

"It was proclaimed a month ago, in the *Government Gazette*—and the responsibility of finding out that fact before you started prospecting was entirely yours. Your names, please?"

Kernwood had opened his mouth to reply when Gunderssen yelled and pointed seawards. The long South Atlantic rollers were sweeping in from the horizon now; and up from the trough of those high seas, up for a few seconds only to drop and disappear, there staggered a little coasting steamer. Gunderssen, with his sailor's eyes, had noticed her flag—the Red Ensign upside down, the distress signal of a dying ship.

"She is finished," he gasped. "Her men—ve must get them."

Even as he spoke he gripped the gunwale of the dinghy, and with the help of Kernwood and Olsen ran her down the sand until the waves surged round their knees and lifted the boat.

"Quick—before the next sea breaks," ordered Gunderssen.

DIAMONDS, arrest, everything else disappeared in the feverish effort to rescue the men of the lost ship. They were in the boat now, Gunderssen steering with an oar, the others pulling. A sea half-filled the boat. Gunderssen baled with his hat, kept the dinghy bows on to the breaking seas, and brought her safely through the surf. Hansen had the engine running when they thudded alongside the *Albatross*. As they jumped for the deck the dinghy swamped and sank.

"Slip the anchor-chain," boomed Gunderssen. He took the wheel and turned out towards the wallowing steamer.

Plainly she was finished, her engines dead within her, decks swept clear, crew gathered in a little group on the bridge. Kernwood saw them holding up a line—a thin rope with which, in some way he could not understand, they expected to save themselves. Then Gunderssen brought the *Albatross* under the coaster's lee, and they heard a desperate voice hailing them. "Can I pass a tow-rope, skipper?"

Gunderssen laughed grimly. "Poor devil of a captain, still hoping to save that ship. How could our little cutter tow a steamer ten times our size—in this sea?" He cupped his hands and shouted back. "I cannot tow. Impossible. All jump when I come alongside."

The men lifted their arms to show they understood. Kernwood counted them—eleven seamen ready to jump for their lives, the captain standing apart, head drooping. And now, when the coaster rolled, she hung over on her beam-ends, showed the weed on her bilge, recovered so sluggishly that Kernwood thought another sea would send her down. Gunderssen did not wait for that. With splendid seamanship he swung the *Albatross* close alongside—close enough for eleven men to drop over the rail on to her deck. "Full speed!" roared Gunderssen, wrenching the wheel hard over to avoid crushing the oak sides of the cutter against the coaster's steel plates. He had taken that tremendous risk—now he drew away thankfully. At that moment Kernwood, counting the men again, groaned and threw out his arms towards the danger they had escaped. "Captain's still there."

"Old fool—I must go back for him," grunted Gunderssen. The steamer and the *Albatross* were drifting steadily towards the breakers; but there was still time—if the captain would take his chance.

They called to him, cursed and shook their fists at him. The captain waved them away. Gunderssen had to bring the *Albatross* round again and make a plan such as could have formed only in the brain of a strong man and a great sailor.

"To the wheel, Olsen," he growled, as the cutter closed in with the hulk. He chose his moment, leapt with gnarled hands clawing for a hold, gained the coaster's deck—and reappeared in a few seconds with his arms round the man who had stayed behind.

But in those few seconds, while the guiding hands of Gunderssen were away from the wheel of the *Albatross*—in those ghastly seconds came disaster. The coaster rolled again, tons of steel bearing down on the cutter, smashing mast and deck, cracking the stout oak planking that had resisted so many blows of the sea. When the coaster slowly lifted, Gunderssen jumped with the man he had rescued. It was magnificent. They reached the *Albatross*—and the *Albatross* was now a wreck. Her engine still thumped bravely down below; but she was filling. Gunderssen took the wheel; and close to death though they all were, Kernwood felt confidence returning with the sight of that huge Viking figure, oilskin-clad, sea-wetted, and undaunted, fighting the last round.

Gunderssen took in the state of his ship at a glance—the seas were smashing white over the bows, finding every gap in the splintered deck, washing noisily over the cabin floor. The end of the *Albatross* was near. Gone was the buoyant lift of her fine

When the coaster slowly lifted, Gunderssen jumped with the man he had rescued.

bows—she was settling, and there was one chance only of escape for those on board.

" I must beach her," growled Gunderssen. " She'll go far in before she strikes. Get life-lines ready."

The *Albatross* moved sluggishly to her grave. As they rolled on towards the beach, Kernwood wiped the spray from his eyes and saw that the man waiting for them there had been joined by others—khaki-clad police on camels. Gunderssen had seen them, too, and he was steering for the group. Those men might take the lines flung from the *Albatross* and haul them all to safety before the menacing surf could draw them back into the ocean for ever.

They could hear the encouraging shouts of the police just before the *Albatross* shuddered, lurched, swept forward on the crest of a wave, and dropped violently, in her death flurry, on the sand. There was, perhaps, a quarter of a minute before the

next oncoming breaker would reach them. But now the lines were in the hands of the men on shore. They were pulling against the backwash—and one by one the company of the *Albatross* struggled into shallow water. Gunderssen went last, and without the help of a rope. He was probably the only man there with the strength to reach the shore unaided. Kernwood lay exhausted on the beach. When he raised his head and counted the limp forms there, he dropped back happily. All hands safe.

Later in the afternoon Mr. Sanderson called the crew of the *Albatross* together, away from the men they had rescued and the police. "Did you find any diamonds?" he asked point-blank.

Gunderssen nodded. "Plenty—and they are out there in the surf."

The excitement was over. There remained only the hardships of the trek to Luderitzbucht under arrest—and imprisonment. Kernwood had been unlucky enough in his life; but he had always steered clear of the crime of illicit diamond dealing and the police. He was filled with gloom, and he saw the same hopeless looks in the faces of Gunderssen and Olsen. Hansen alone showed no trace of feeling—a silent, thoughtful man was Hansen.

But Mr. Sanderson, though his work lay in desert territories and consisted mainly in punishing wrong, had not lost his sympathy for all mankind.

"You've lost your ship—and you've saved twelve lives," he said. "I am going to forget this affair and you must do the same. I shall report that you were wrecked here. Shake hands on that." They all gripped and were thankful.

Kernwood was present that night when Olav Hansen asked his skipper when he was going to buy a new ship.

"A ship? I'll have to go before the mast now, Hansen," Gunderssen replied.

Hansen shook his head, and a rare smile lighted his heavy face. "Ve still have the diamonds, skipper," he declared.

They stared at him.

"Yess, truly," said the proud Hansen. "When I saw that magistrate on the beach, and the sea rising, and the steamer in distress, I felt in my heart that the diamonds were not safe. So I put them in small bags and fastened each one under the wing of one of my pigeons—my beautiful carrier pigeons that take messages from me at sea to my wife in Cape Town. Those pigeons go always straight home."

In the waterside taverns of Cape Town you hear yarns of the Coast of Diamonds. They are true yarns.

"THE STRAND MAGAZINE" is happy to announce that it has secured for publication

"THE LETTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS TO HIS OLDEST FRIEND"

THESE letters have never hitherto been published. They are selected from a correspondence, lasting for nearly forty years, between the famous novelist and Mr. Thomas Beard, fellow-reporter with Dickens in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons. One of them, written in 1832, which will be reproduced in facsimile, is, with the exception of one written as a schoolboy, the earliest known letter written by Charles Dickens.

THE letters are intimate ones dealing with many of the greatest events in Dickens's life, telling of his early financial embarrassments, of his first successes, of his experiences as a newspaper correspondent, of his grief at the death of Mary Hogarth, and of his constant thought for other people.

NO Dickens discovery of such importance has been made for many years. The publication of the letters has been authorized by Sir Henry Fielding Dickens, K.C

In the November "Strand" *Ready October 24th*

A BULLDOG DRUMMOND STORY.

THE MYSTERY OF THE STUDIO

By "SAPPER"

Illustrated by A. R. THOMSON

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Bulldog Drummond and his friends, Ted Jerningham and Peter Darrell, are disturbed by the mysterious disappearance of young Bob Marton, who has been chased through the fog into Jerningham's Devonshire home by two warders who mistook him for an escaped murderer. Marton, who is a member of a firm of solicitors, Marton, Peters and Newall, had confessed that he was in some terrible predicament which involved a Comtessa Bartelozzi, and Drummond and his friends go to Glensham House nearby, which they know to have been his destination. There they find Morris, the escaped murderer, wearing Marton's clothes and babbling about the ghost of a woman who, he says, gave him the clothes. Next they discover Marton's dead body. Morris escapes into the fog and is drowned in Grimstone Mire. An American named Hardcastle, who has recently leased the house, arrives with two companions, Slingsby and Penton. Drummond suspects Hardcastle of being connected with the murder, and with Jerningham and Darrell returns to Jerningham's house to 'phone the police, whose arrival they are still awaiting when the Comtessa Bartelozzi, who is Hardcastle's daughter, seeks shelter from the fog. With them and the police she returns to Glensham House and retires to bed. A little later a constable points to an astonishing apparition at the head of the stairs which shortly disappears. It is followed by a cry from the Comtessa's room. The men rush upstairs and break open her door, which is locked.

THE Comtessa was lying on the bed clad in pyjamas. She was motionless, and Hardcastle rushed to her and picked her up.

"It's only a faint, boys," he cried. "Get some brandy."

But even as he spoke, with a shuddering sigh the Comtessa opened her eyes. For a moment she stared in bewilderment at the group of men. Then suddenly her eyes dilated with terror.

"Where is she?" she screamed. "What is she?"

"There, there, honey," said Hardcastle. "It's quite all right now. Tell your old Dad what frightened you."

"Oh! it was horrible," she moaned. "I was just getting into bed when a hand touched me on the shoulder. A woman was standing there—a woman in black with grey hair. Her arm was stretched out pointing at me—and her eyes——"

She began to shudder violently.

Hardcastle looked significantly at the other men.

"Perhaps you imagined it, honey. Maybe it was a trick of the light."

"But it wasn't," she cried, wildly. "And Mr. Jerningham said this room was haunted—didn't you?"

She appealed to him, and he nodded.

"That's right, Comtessa," he agreed.

"It was a ghost," she went on. "It must have been a ghost. It must have been her the convict saw. Oh! let me get out of this room."

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"Honey, don't take on so," implored her father. "Even if it was a ghost the poor thing didn't do you any harm. Come into your Dad's room and he'll stay with you till you're all right again."

He put his arm round her waist, and led her gently out, whilst the others, after a brief pause, trooped down into the hall.

"Well, if that don't beat cock fighting, gentlemen," said the Inspector, scratching his head. "I take it we all saw the woman or the ghost or whatever it was?"

"Very clearly," agreed Drummond.

"And, gentlemen, the lady's door was locked. Locked on the inside. It must have gone clean through the wood."

"SHE is quieter now," said Hardcastle, coming down the stairs. "I've given her a dose of sleep dope. And the first thing that I guess I owe is an apology to you, Captain Drummond, for my sneering remark about ghosts earlier in the evening. Moreover, as my daughter says, it does seem to bear out part of Morris's story. If we saw it, so may he have done."

"That's so, sir," said the Inspector. "But there's one point we mustn't forget. A ghost can go through a closed door. We've seen it happen. But a ghost can't carry a suit of clothes through a closed door. That being so, we still have not accounted for Morris having on the murdered man's clothes. Anyway, clothes or no clothes, one thing *is* certain. No ghost can murder a man, certainly not by bashing his head in."

"I suppose that's a fair assumption," said Penton.

"Very well, then. Let's disregard the ghost for a moment, and I think we can reconstruct what happened. Morris broke in, and in all probability thought the place was empty. All you gentlemen were out. Only Mr. Marton was in the house. Maybe he came downstairs, thinking it was one of you returning, and Morris attacked him. Marton fled and Morris pursued him, finally doing him to death in the room above. Then he changed clothes; came down and found the supper spread out. While he was in the room he suddenly saw the ghost, which terrified him so much that he daren't leave. And there you other gentlemen found him. To his dismay you recognized his clothes, and the blood on the ceiling showed him the game was up. Half tipsy with beer, and with the thought of the ghost in his mind, he told the first story that came into his head."

"That sounds very feasible," said Hardcastle; "very feasible indeed."

"So it seems," remarked Drummond. "By the way, Inspector, has the weapon with which Marton was murdered been discovered?"

"Not yet. He probably threw it out of the window, and I'll have the ground searched thoroughly to-morrow morning. Then we'll have his finger-prints and absolute proof."

"Look here, Mr. Inspector," said Hardcastle, in a rather hesitating voice, "I don't know if what I'm going to suggest is very irregular, but if it is you must put it down to my ignorance of the law. Now, I take it we are all agreed that Morris murdered Marton in some such manner as you described, and then blundered into Grimstone Mire. At any rate, Morris can never be brought to trial. Wal—I've just obtained a lease of this house: I'm engaged in certain scientific researches, and I must frankly admit I don't want to be disturbed. Now what I want to know is this: Is it necessary to say anything about this ghost? I quite understand that if Morris wasn't dead it would be impossible not to allude to it. He would tell the same story he told Captain Drummond. But now that he is dead, are we defeating the ends of justice in any way if we keep our mouths shut about it? It can do neither Morris nor Marton any good, and the only result that is going to happen is that this house will be surrounded with swarms of journalists and sightseers."

A faint smile twitched round Drummond's lips, but his face was in the shadow.

"In addition to that," continued Hardcastle, "though naturally such a thing will not deter us if it is our duty to speak, I'm sadly afraid we're all of us going to have our legs pulled nearly off. We have seen it—we *know*. But that's a very different thing from convincing somebody else. If we hadn't been here to-night, would we have believed it if we'd been told it? Your police are second to none in the world, but they're a hard-headed body of men. And I can't help thinking, Inspector, that you're going to come in for a lot of chaff from your brother officers. What do you say, Captain Drummond?"

"I quite see your point," agreed Drummond, pleasantly. "Well, the Inspector must decide. Do we burble of ghosts or do we not?"

The Inspector cleared his throat. Until Hardcastle's remarks, that aspect of the case had not struck him. Now it did—forcibly.

"I think we can look at it this way, gentlemen," he remarked. "The crime we are investigating ended with the death of Morris in Grimstone Mire. Nothing that has happened subsequent to that can have any bearing on the crime. In other words, the

"Where is she?" the Comtessa screamed.
"What is she?"

fact that we saw this ghost has nothing whatever to do with the matter. It lends a certain air of truth to part of Morris's rigmarole, I agree. And, as you said, Mr. Hardcastle, if he were still alive it would be our duty to say what we had seen. But as he isn't it is a thing which it seems to me does not come within the scope of inquiry. Naturally Captain Drummond will have to state what was said by Morris

to him and his friends, but at that I think we are entitled to leave it. It is no part of the duty of the police to cause inconvenience to law-abiding citizens, and I quite understand that you, sir, would find it most annoying to have crowds of inquisitive people all round the house."

"Good," said Drummond; "The oracle has spoken. Ghosts are off. And that being so I think we might go home, Ted, and hit the hay. My kindest regards, Mr. Hardcastle, to the Comtessa, and I sincerely hope that the little wanderer is laid for to-night at any rate. But you must certainly rope her in for the cinema work your daughter tells me you are interested in. Night, night, souls."

And it was not until they reached the main road that he spoke again.

"There's no doubt about it, boys," he said, "that that little bunch of beauties is pretty high up in the handicap. It's a pleasure to have met them. There's a calm nerve about their doings which beats the band. It's gorgeous. And after he had shown us the old ghost, the subtle way Hardcastle got round the Inspector was a delight."

"I gathered from your face you were a bit sceptical about the spectre," said Darrell.

"Sceptical!" laughed Drummond. "I should say. For a moment I admit I was taken in. The thing was staged so well. And I'd been going on the assumption that there was only one female in the house. But then I went back to our one basic idea—that Morris was speaking the truth. And that being so the Inspector's profound statement that a ghost can't carry a suit of clothes on its arm assumes a rather different complexion from what that worthy intended. That was the woman whom Morris saw, and who gave him the clothes. And having done her little piece at the top of the stairs, she backed into honey's room, who then bolted the door and let out an ear-splitter. Meanwhile the ghost vanishes through some secret panel, and that's that."

"Probably you're right, old boy," said Jerningham. "But for the life of me I can't see their object in doing it."

"That's what I was trying to get at, Ted, all the time we were in the hall. And I think it's this way. Their original plan miscarried owing to our being there, and so they had to amend it. They knew the police would arrive shortly, and that from then on there would always be at least one constable in the house. They knew also that we should mention the woman, which would cause awkward questions. So the first thing they do is to send the Comtessa along after us—I saw the marks of footsteps *leaving* that panel in the hall—partially to find out what we were going to say and partially to sustain the bluff that she had been in Plymouth. Now, since that cry we heard was almost certainly Morris in Grimstone Mire the sweet thing must have known of his death before she saw us. And incidentally I wonder if he fell or was pushed? His death was a godsend to them. However, to continue—back we go with the lady, who is suitably greeted by dear Dad, once more registering her absence in Plymouth. Then what about the other woman? If 'honey' was in Plymouth what about the female Morris said he saw? Where was she, or was it a complete invention? Great idea—stage her as a ghost, and as I said before, they staged her damned well."

"Do you really think we ought to let them get away with it?" said Darrell.

"How can we prevent it, old boy? If Morris wasn't dead I'd agree with you. He may have been a swine, but we couldn't have let the poor blighter swing without making an effort to save him. But now he's dead what's the use of worrying? No, our line is to pretend that we are in complete agreement with the theory put forward by the Inspector, and once the inquest is over set to work from the other end. I'm inclined to think that if there are any survivors left at all of the firm of Marton, Peters and Newall we might be able to get on to something."

"I'm just wondering," said Jerningham, "if by chance that is one—Dick Newall, with whom I've played a lot of golf. As far as I remember he is a legal bird of sorts."

"The rum thing to my mind is what Hardcastle's crowd are doing down here at all," said Darrell, as they turned in at the gate of Merridale Hall.

"The solution of that little problem, old lad," cried Drummond, "may possibly prove to be the solace of our declining years. But don't forget that the one essential thing is to make that bunch believe that they've fooled us. We've got to do a bit in the acting line ourselves. For, unless I'm much mistaken the situation is this at the moment. They know they've bluffed the Inspector; they're not certain about us. And it therefore behoves us to allay their fears. And that is going to entail a certain discretion at the inquest. I should loathe to get it in the neck for perjury."

CHAPTER IV.

AS was only to be expected, the affair attracted an enormous amount of attention. The escape of Morris, duly reported in all the evening papers, had already brought Dartmoor into the centre of the limelight. The subsequent development increased the interest.

Two facts, one positive and one negative, came to light the next day. The first was the clear imprint of a boot of regulation prison pattern on the track over Grimstone Mire—a boot, moreover, of the size taken by Morris. The second was the complete failure of the police to discover any trace of the weapon with which the crime had been committed. And when the inquest opened at eleven o'clock the day after there was still no sign of it.

With some reluctance Mr. Hardcastle had agreed to its being held at Glensham House. At first he demurred on the grounds of the added publicity, but when it was pointed out to him how very much proceedings would be facilitated if the inquiry was held on the spot he finally consented.

"The whole thing is most annoying, Captain Drummond," he remarked, as they met in the hall. "I particularly dislike notoriety in any form, and then a crime like this occurs, literally in my house."

"Deuced boring, Mr. Hardcastle," agreed Drummond, sympathetically. "I, too, like to blush unseen. Ah! there, if I mistake not, is your charming daughter. Good morning, Comtessa. I see you have decided to risk the ghost."

"Please don't speak about it, Captain Drummond," she cried. "My father persuaded me to stay on the one more night just for this inquest, but I leave this afternoon. You only saw her in the distance, don't forget. When I saw her she was as close as I am to you."

"A terrifying experience, Comtessa," he remarked, gravely. "Hullo! It looks as if the individual with the somewhat bulbous nose is about to kick off. Incidentally, who is the man talking to your father?"

"Mr. Peters," she said. "He is one of the members of Bob Marton's firm."

He proved to be the first witness, and identified the murdered man as Robert Marton. He explained that no relative was available for the purpose, owing to the recent death of Mr. Marton, senior, and that he had therefore come down from London on hearing the news. He further added that it was he who had sent Marton down at the request of Mr. Hardcastle, who had recently acquired the lease of Glensham House through his firm.

"When did he receive your instructions?" demanded the Coroner.

"On Tuesday afternoon—the day before he was killed. I gave him the address on a piece of paper, as he did not know the house."

The Coroner consulted some documents in front of him.

"Am I not right in supposing that it was on Tuesday evening that his father was killed owing to an accident with a gun?" he asked.

"Perfectly right," said Peters, speaking with some emotion. "I may say that the two things, coming so close together, have been a very great shock to me and the other members of the firm."

THE Coroner nodded sympathetically "I am sure that we quite understand that, Mr. Peters," he said. "But there is one point that I should like to get clear. You say that you gave him his instructions on Tuesday afternoon, so that he presumably left London on Wednesday morning. Where did he spend Tuesday night? I assume he can not have been at home, for if he had been his father's death would naturally have prevented him coming here."

"Exactly," agreed the witness. "From inquiries I have made I find that Robert Marton did not go home on Tuesday night."

"Have you any idea where he stayed?"

"None whatever, sir. His train on Wednesday morning left Paddington very early, and he probably stayed at some hotel."

"So he was in ignorance of his father's death?"

"That I can't tell you, as he may have seen it in the papers. But I assume he did not, as otherwise he would surely have got out at the first stop and returned to Surbiton."

'And he did not telephone to his father or mother, or send them any message saying he was remaining in London for the night?"

"Certainly not to his mother. With regard to his father unfortunately I cannot tell you, but I should think in all probability not. Had he done so I think he would have told Mrs. Marton."

Peters stood down, and Hardcastle was called.

"Now, Mr. Hardcastle," said the Coroner, "will you kindly tell us all you know of this distressing affair."

The witness bowed gravely.

"Distressing is too mild a word for it, sir," he remarked. "I feel that I shall never forgive myself for having been the unwitting cause of this poor boy's death. He was down here on business for me, and then this ghastly thing happened to him."

He paused, overcome with emotion.

"However," he continued, after recovering his composure, "I will tell you all I know. My daughter, my friends and I came down here on Tuesday to have a look at the house, which, as Mr. Peters told you, I have recently leased. Marton was to come down on Wednesday, as you have heard. That morning we all went over to Plymouth

to see that some alterations on my yacht had been carried out. Then, leaving my daughter there, we returned here to find that a dense fog had come down. As time went on and he did not appear, we realized he must have lost his way, and so my friend Mr. Slingsby and I went out to look for him. And it was then we ran into two warders on the road, who told us about the escaped convict, and also mentioned that they had met a young man who was obviously lost, but who had finally reached Merridale Hall — the property of this gentleman."

He bowed to Jerningham.

"From their description of him we realized it must be Marton, and so we walked on with the idea of finding Merridale Hall. In the fog we missed it, and then we got hopelessly lost ourselves. We wandered backwards and forwards, and then there came a crash from some little distance off, which sounded like a car running into a gate or a wall. We blundered on until, quite suddenly, Marton ran right into us. He told us he had had a drink at Merridale Hall, and had then come on in another attempt to find us."

He paused and blew his nose.

"I now come, sir, to the dreadful tragedy. The boy, I may say, did not seem at all himself. He was nervy, and about seven o'clock he began to shiver. Clearly he'd got fever, and so I gave him some quinine and told him to go to bed. And that"—his emotion was evident—"was the last time I saw the poor lad alive."

"Take your time, Mr. Hardcastle," said the Coroner. "We all of us understand how you feel."

"I thank you, sir," continued the witness, after a moment or two. "I should think it was about eight o'clock that Mr. Slingsby and I decided to go for a walk. It seemed to us that the fog had lifted a little, and we felt the need of some exercise. Mr. Penton refused to come, but went to the garage instead, as something had gone wrong with the car. We thought that if we stuck to the main road we should have no difficulty, but somehow or other we got off it, and once again we found ourselves lost. And it was not until well after ten that we finally got back to the house. The first thing we found was that the whole of our supper had been eaten, and we were just blaming Mr. Penton as being the only possible person who could have taken it, when a man dashed down the stairs, rushed through the hall and vanished into the night. We stood dumbfounded, and a moment or two later we saw three gentlemen standing on the top of the stairs. And they told us what had happened in our absence."

"Thank you, Mr. Hardcastle," said the Coroner. "There is, however, one question I would like to ask you. Did the murdered man say anything to you about his father's death?"

"No, sir. Not a word. The first I heard of it was from this gentleman, Captain Drummond."

"Thank you. Then I think we may safely conclude that Robert Marton was in ignorance of the fact. And now to keep things in their correct order I will call Captain Drummond. . . . My first question, sir, is to ask what brought you here at all?"

"My friends and I, believing the house to be empty, decided that we would come along and see if the rumour of its being haunted was true," answered Drummond.

"Kindly tell us what happened."

"The first thing was that a strong reek of cigarette smoke proved the house was not empty. And we traced it to the room in which we found Morris."

"Did you know it was Morris as soon as you saw him?"

"Yes," said Drummond. "A warder had given me a description of him earlier in the day, and I spotted him by the red scar on his face."

"And then?"

"I recognized the clothes he was wearing as belonging to a young man called Marton, who had lost his way during the afternoon and come to Merridale Hall."

BRIEFLY Drummond outlined the events of the afternoon, and Darrell watched Hardcastle covertly. But his face was as expressionless as the Sphinx.

"You, too, say that he seemed nervy,' said the Coroner, when Drummond had finished.

"He did."

"Did he give you any reason?"

"I think the unexpected appearance of the two warders looming out of the fog, and the discharge of a rifle, had shaken him considerably."

"Were you not surprised when you returned with your friends to find him gone?"

"Very. And my assumption was that he was a little ashamed of the condition of fright he had been in and had left."

"Did he say he was going to Glensham House?"

"He never mentioned Glensham House."

"Now, Mr. Hardcastle stated that it was you who told him of the death of Mr. Marton, senior. How did you know?"

Once again Darrell glanced at Hardcastle, whose eyes were now fixed on Drummond.

"Marton told me his name and the name of his firm," said Drummond. 'And when

"To be perfectly candid, Captain Drummond, I do not believe that you went to Glensham House in search of ghosts," she said.

I happened to see the account of the accident in the paper I assumed it was either his father or his uncle who was dead."

Almost imperceptibly Hardcastle relaxed.

"I see," said the Coroner. "Now, Captain Drummond, will you please continue from the point where you found Morris hiding in the room here."

"I first of all asked him where he got his clothes from."

"What did he say?"

"He told me that an old woman had given them to him, and that they belonged to a son of hers who was dead."

"But since you knew they belonged to Marton, you must have known that his statement was a lie."

"My brain was moving on those lines," said Drummond, mildly, "when we saw the stain on the ceiling."

"What did you do when you saw the stain?"

"We took Morris with us upstairs, and went and investigated. And we then found the murdered man."

"Did Morris show any reluctance to going upstairs with you?"

"The very strongest."

"What did he say when he saw the body?"

For a moment or two Drummond hesitated. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"He said something about a ghost," he remarked.

The Coroner smiled.

"Ghosts seem to have been popular that night. Now, Captain Drummond," he went on, severely, "did you, or did you not, attach any importance to this story of Morris's?"

"He certainly seemed to attach a great deal of importance to it himself," answered Drummond. "And then, before we realized what he intended to do, he bolted. I knew it would be useless to pursue him in the fog, and that sooner or later he would certainly be caught. And we were just going to ring up the police when we met Mr. Hardcastle and Mr. Slingsby here in the hall."

"NOW, Captain Drummond, I am going to put a leading question to you. You and your friends are the only people who actually saw and spoke to Morris. I dismiss the brief glimpse that Mr. Hardcastle got of him as he dashed through the hall. Have you any doubts in your mind that Morris was the murderer of Robert Marton?"

"The evidence on the point appears conclusive, Mr. Coroner," said Drummond, and the jury nodded their heads in agreement. They were getting bored. The case was such an obvious one. But the Coroner —a man of stern determination—was not to be baulked. First Darrell, then Jerningham, was called to substantiate Drummond's story. Then Penton deposed to what he had seen when working on the car in the garage. And, finally, the Inspector put forward his reconstruction of the crime.

"The only thing wanting, sir, for absolute proof," he concluded, "is the discovery of the weapon with which the murder was committed. The doctor has told us that the crime took place round about nine o'clock. He also says that, in his opinion, the weapon used was something in the nature of a meat chopper. On the handle of that weapon, if we find it, will be the finger-prints—the finger-prints of the murderer: the finger-prints of Morris. But, so far, the most exhaustive search has failed to bring it to light."

"You have searched the grounds?" asked the Coroner.

"Yes, sir. But they are, of course, extensive, and we have not given up hope of discovering it. It is almost impossible that he should have had it on him, and in all probability, therefore, it is either hidden in the house or he threw it from the window of the room in which he killed Marton."

Finally, the sergeant was called who gave evidence of his call at Merridale Hall, and the presence there of Comtessa Bartelozzi, whom, the Coroner decided, it was not necessary to trouble. And so the inquest ended with the verdict that had been obvious from the commencement: "Wilful murder by John Morris, subsequently believed drowned in Grimstone Mire."

"I think we may congratulate ourselves on the way that went off," said Hardcastle to Drummond, as the jury began to disperse. "It was most masterly the way you avoided any direct reference to the ghost, and I'm very much obliged to you."

"Don't mention it," said Drummond, affably. "It is a pleasure to assist you in any way. But you'll still have to watch it. We may have finished with the inquest, but we've not got rid of the reporters yet. Here's one of the blighters bearing down on us now."

But it was not at the newspaper man that Hardcastle was looking, and following the direction of his glance, Drummond saw Jerningham, at the other side of the hall, chatting to Mr. Peters.

"May I trouble you for a few moments, gentlemen?" The reporter, note-book in hand, paused hopefully.

"You may not," laughed Drummond. "So long, Mr. Hardcastle. Doubtless we shall meet again in less stirring times. Are you coming, Ted? Peter is in the bus already."

"A stroke of luck, Hugh," said Jerningham, as they left. "You remember my telling you about Dick Newall, whom I've often played golf with? Well—he is in the firm. He's the sort of opposite number to young Marton. There's an old Newall, and Dick is his nephew."

"Good. But we'll have to get hold of him on the quiet. Hardcastle had an eye like a gimlet on you when you were talking to Peters."

"And he had an eye like a gimlet on you when you were giving evidence, old son," said Darrell.

"I know he had, Peter. He's not very good at disguising his expression. What a stroke of luck for them that Morris hadn't got to be reckoned with! But, for all that, the more you look into it, the more masterly do you find the way they've extricated themselves from a very nasty position."

"What's going to happen if the police do find the chopper?" said Darrell.

"Find your grandmother, Peter. Morris was not the only thing that went into Grimstone Mire that night. They aren't the type of bunch who would keep a weapon covered with finger-prints that are *not* Morris's. No, I should say that delightful creature Penton bunged the chopper into the bog immediately the thing was done."

"Bring the cocktails, Jennings," shouted Jerningham, as they got out of the car.

"The point now is, what's the next move?" said Darrell.

"The trail here is dead for the moment," remarked Drummond, lighting a cigarette. "I think we'd better try this pal of yours, Ted—young Newall."

"Right you are, old lad. There's nothing to stop us. We can easily beetle up to Town by the afternoon train from Plymouth. But I can't promise that we'll get anything out of him. I mean, even if by chance he knows something, he may flatly refuse to pass it on."

"We can but have a dart at it," answered Drummond. "Because it's perfectly obvious that the matter can't stop where it is."

"It was rather interesting to hear that friend Hardcastle has a yacht," said Darrell, as Jennings announced lunch.

"The whole thing is deuced interesting," cried Drummond, cheerfully. "Let's get to the stewed hash, Ted, and tell Jennings to throw a few toothbrushes into a bag. And you never can tell—I shouldn't be surprised if we didn't find ourselves travelling up with little Pansy Face."

He paused, struck with a sudden idea.

"I say, chaps—what's Algy Longworth doing these days?"

They both stared at him.

"Algy and Pansy Face. Our Comtessa. Might be rather useful if they met one another. Algy wouldn't know us. We shouldn't know Algy. Perhaps we'd get on to something that way."

"How are we going to get them to meet?"

"I haven't an earthly at the moment," admitted Drummond. "But it's a possibility that's worth bearing in mind. If we do travel up with Pansy Face—and she said she was going this afternoon—we'll try to find out her haunts in Town."

AND as it turned out, the first person they saw on the platform at Plymouth was the Comtessa. Hardcastle was with her, and she gave them a charming smile.

"Are you all going up to London as well, Captain Drummond?" she asked.

"That's the idea, Comtessa."

"How thankful I am to get away from that dreadful place," said the Comtessa as he sat down opposite her. "These last two or three days have seemed like an awful nightmare."

"They have certainly been full of incident," agreed Drummond.

"I thought it was charming of you to give your evidence about the poor boy in the way you did," she said, leaning towards him and lowering her voice.

He looked a little puzzled.

"I hope I'm not being dense, Comtessa, but I don't quite follow you. In what other way could I have given it?"

"My dear man, you're not going to tell me that you really thought the cause of his nerves was due to the fact that two warders suddenly loomed out of the fog?"

She smiled and lit a cigarette.

"No, Captain Drummond—that did well enough for the inquest, and it is much better that his poor mother should think so. But as a man of the world you cannot really believe it yourself."

"My dear Comtessa," he remarked, "you are, in our English phraseology, barking up the wrong tree. The youngster struck me as being very unfit. I should say he had been drinking too much, and hitting it up generally. But more than that I frankly know nothing about."

"Do you mean to say that he didn't tell you he was in very serious trouble?"

Drummond nodded.

"My dear lady, he was a complete stranger to me. I was with him for ten minutes at the most. Would he be likely to spring an intimate confession on me in such a very short time?"

She looked at him keenly, but Hugh Drummond was not accounted one of the best poker players in London for nothing.

"I'll tell you why I thought you must know more than you said," she continued, after a moment. "To be perfectly candid, Captain Drummond, I did not believe that you went to Glensham House in search of ghosts."

"It did sound a bit thin, I admit," he laughed. "And yet there was the ghost that you and I both saw. However, if it wasn't the ghost that took us there, what did you think it was?"

Drummond and the woman seated in the car stared at one another speechlessly.

"I thought you were worried over Bob Marton, and that knowing he was going to Glensham House, you came along to see if he was all right."

"At ten o'clock at night! Really, Comtessa, it seems an odd hour to pay a call. And you are ignoring the somewhat important fact that he never even mentioned Glensham House to me."

"It was such an extraordinary coincidence, wasn't it, you selecting that particular night?"

"Foggy, you see. It is then that the ghost walks. Though the story current in these parts is about a very different type of manifestation from the one we saw."

"Really! What is that?"

"Honestly I would sooner not tell you, Comtessa."

He shook his head gravely and stared out of the window."

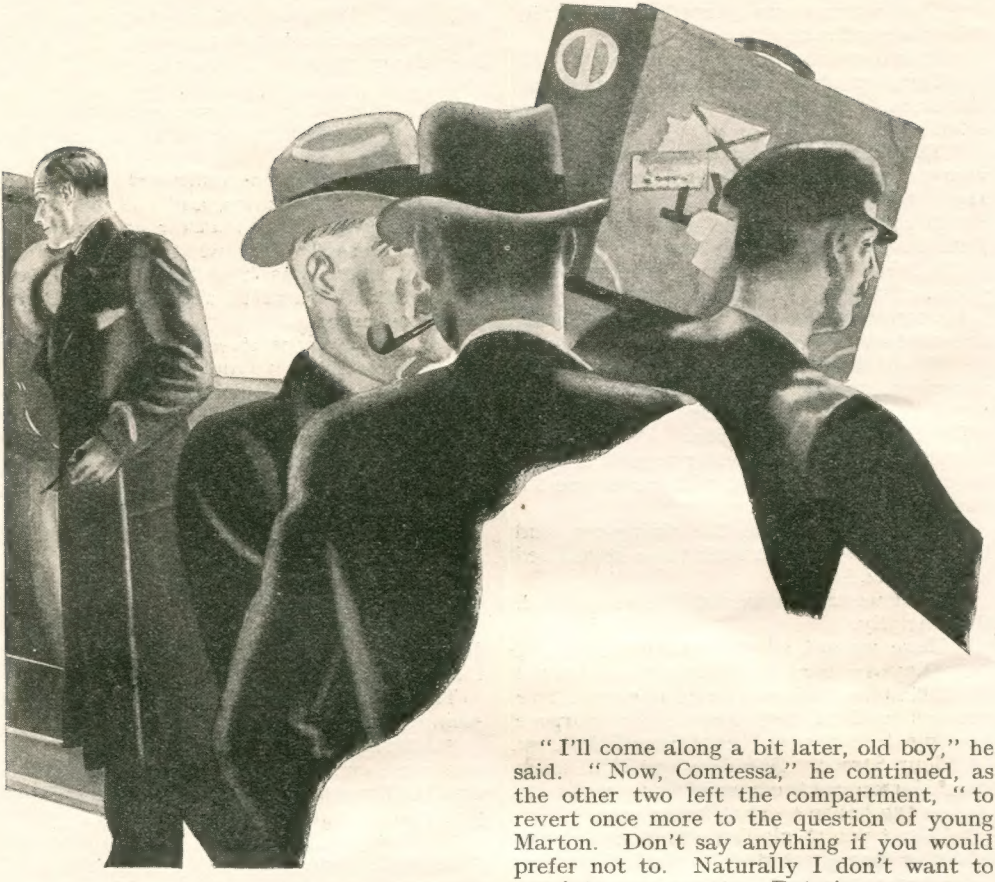
"But I would like to know," she insisted.

"Comtessa," he said, after a while, "you wouldn't think, would you, to look at me that I am at all a nervous individual. And I must say for myself that it has to be something pretty large in the human line for me to get the wind up. But when it comes to the thing that is reputed to haunt Glensham House, it's a different matter. Ted knows more about it than I do; he'll tell you."

"What's that, old lad?" said Jerningham, apparently waking up suddenly.

"I was telling the Comtessa about the horror of Glensham House," explained Drummond. "It's a thing, Comtessa—a monstrous, misshapen thing."

"That's right," said Jerningham. "No one knows what it is for certain, because



everyone who has seen it either goes mad or dies. Some people say it is an elemental, of incredible strength and ferocity. Others say that it is some dark secret of the Glenshams. And one of the few facts that seems to be known about it is that its appearance is always preceded by a horrible vault-like smell. Whether, of course, there is any truth in it at all I don't know. West Country people are notoriously superstitious. And it may be that occasionally on foggy nights Grimstone Mire produces this strange fetid odour which by some means or other reaches the house."

"And that is what you came to see?" she exclaimed, a little breathlessly.

"That was our idea," answered Drummond. "Though probably the whole thing is a fable."

The train was slowing down for Exeter, and he rose.

"What about a spot of tea?" remarked Jerningham.

"I'm with you, Ted," said Darrell, but Drummond shook his head.

"I'll come along a bit later, old boy," he said. "Now, Comtessa," he continued, as the other two left the compartment, "to revert once more to the question of young Marton. Don't say anything if you would prefer not to. Naturally I don't want to pry into any secrets. But since you mentioned the matter in the first instance yourself, what was this trouble he was in?"

She hesitated. Then, taking her cigarette case from her bag, she opened it. And over the match which Drummond held for her their eyes met.

"Very serious financial trouble, Captain Drummond," she said gravely. "The poor lad confided in me. I can't tell you the details. They are too complicated. And, anyway, it's not my secret."

"I quite understand, Comtessa," answered Drummond. "And I shall, of course, respect your confidence. Confound it—here are some people getting in. Why is it that certain individuals are born without tact?"

She smiled at him sweetly.

"Do you ever dance in London?" she asked.

"I periodically tread a measure and then mangle a kipper," he said. "Ciro's and the Embassy, and one or two others of the smaller places."

"Do you know the Custard Pot, in Wardour Street?"

"That's s new one on me," he answered. "Is it a good spot?"

"It is a quiet one," she murmured.

"Then it shall be added to my list, Comtessa," he said. "Do you go there often?"

"That depends," she answered. "Most young men in London to-day are so boring, aren't they?"

"If you dare to risk it," said Drummond, "the Senior Sports will always find me."

"I think I might—once. And my telephone number is Mayfair 90218."

He scribbled the number in his notebook, and once again their eyes met.

"What about some tea, Comtessa?" he remarked, but she shook her head.

"I detest eating in a train," she answered. "But don't let me stop you."

"It always sounds better to call it tea," he grinned. "So if you will excuse me I'll join the other two for a while."

He strolled along to the dining-car, and having joined them at their table he ordered a whisky-and-soda.

"Have we or have we not?" he remarked, thoughtfully.

"Have we not what?" said Darrell.

"Allayed her suspicions," answered Drummond. "Since you left, chaps, I've got off with Pansy Face. We purpose dancing together at the Custard Pot, in Wardour Street. But does she still think that Marton told me something while he was in the house? That is the crux."

"Didn't you think Ted was inventing the whole of that ghost stuff?" put in Darrell.

Drummond stared at him.

"Of course I did. And I thought he did it deuced well, though what he wanted to introduce the smell for, the Lord alone knows. You don't mean to say there's any truth in it, Ted?"

"No; I don't say that. But for the first time to-day, funnily enough—and I'd forgotten to mention it before—I heard that story. Some bloke at the inquest told me. That is the Glensham legend."

"Well, I think Pansy Face swallowed it all right. But it's the other point that is the really important one. I asked her point blank what was the trouble she alluded to, and she said he had got into a mess over money, and had confided in her."

"Possibly the truth," said Darrell.

"He said to me that afternoon, 'I wish it was only that,'" answered Drummond. "A mess over money doesn't make a fellow go in fear of his life. And most certainly a mess over money isn't going to cause them to murder him. No, Peter, it must be more than that. You may bet your bottom dollar that young Marton had served his purpose and had lost his nerve in so doing. They were afraid of his squealing and wanted him out of the way. But what was the purpose? That's the point."

HE relapsed into silence and stared out of the window at the flying countryside.

Marton had been murdered for some reason as yet unknown, and the murderers had got away with it as far as the police were concerned. But what the murderers did not know was how far they had got away with it where he and Ted and Peter were concerned.

For the moment it seemed to him that the other side would do nothing. In fact, they would do nothing until Drummond's own next move proved that he and his companions had not been bluffed. Then the scrap would begin in earnest. But the difficulty lay in what the next move was going to be. Unless they could get some information out of Dick Newall, it looked as if they were up against a blank wall.

"When can we get in touch with your pal, Ted?" he asked.

"Almost certainly this evening, old boy. He's nearly always in the club before dinner. Hallo! here is Mr. Peters."

The solicitor paused by their table on seeing Jerningham.

"Afternoon, Mr. Peters. I didn't know you were on the train. Let me introduce Captain Drummond and Mr. Darrell. Won't you take a seat at our table?"

"Thank you, thank you!" cried the other. "With pleasure. I am really so worried and distracted over this shocking affair, coming so closely on top of the other, that I hardly know what I'm doing. I fear it will completely break up poor Mrs. Marton. She idolized Bob."

"It's very sad indeed," agreed Drummond. "Such shocking bad luck. By the way, Mr. Peters, I didn't like to ask him personally, but perhaps you can tell me. My father knew a man called Hardcastle very well indeed a few years ago in South Africa. I was wondering if it was the same one."

"I really can't say," answered the lawyer. "He may have been in South Africa; in fact, I should think it is more than likely he was. He seems to have travelled extensively. All I know about him is that he wanted to rent Glensham House. And as we have been the family solicitors for years, he naturally came to us about it. I was a little surprised, I must admit. It didn't strike me as at all the sort of place a man like him would want. But houses of that size are difficult things to let these days, especially so far away from London, and so I closed with his offer at once, though it was for a very short lease."

"So he is not proposing to make his home there?"

"Dear me, no! He has taken it for three months only."

"I hear that he is inventing some cinema gadget," went on Drummond, casually. "At least, we gathered so from his daughter."

"I know he is interested in the films," said the lawyer. "In fact, we did some business for him in that line. But I think he is a man with many irons in the fire."

"I suppose you don't happen to know anything about the legend of the house?" put in Jerningham.

"Most old houses have some sort of legend attached to them, haven't they?" said Drummond. "Especially when they have secret passages as well."

"Now, that *is* a fact with regard to Glensham House," said the lawyer. "The place is honeycombed with them. And, funnily enough, that is a thing that particularly attracted Mr. Hardcastle. As an American, he seemed to consider that no old English house was worth ten cents—I think that was his phrase—unless it had a secret passage."

"Indeed," murmured Drummond. "Well, he seems to have got his money's worth this time. Do you know the entrances to any of them?"

"I haven't an idea," answered the other. He called for his bill.

"Well—I must be getting back to my carriage," he continued. "I've got an hour's work in front of me before we reach London. Good day to you, gentlemen. Good day."

"Interesting, that point about Hardcastle and the secret passages," said Drummond as the lawyer disappeared. "May mean something; may not. What about the other half, chaps? And then I think I'll rejoin Pansy Face. I'd hate her to think my love for her had waned."

But the Comtessa was immersed in a novel when they returned to their compartment, and save for one swift smile and a hope that the tea had been good, nothing more was said till the train reached Paddington. And then in the general rising their shoulders touched.

"You won't forget the Custard Pot?" she murmured.

"I shall haunt the door," he answered, "till I get arrested as a street nuisance. Let me take your dressing-case and I'll see you into a taxi."

"The car should be here," she said, leaning out of the window. "Yes. There's the chauffeur."

She beckoned to a man in livery who was standing on the platform.

"*Au revoir*, Captain Drummond. Don't forget, Mayfair 90218."

"The line will probably fuse," he murmured as he strolled at her side towards the car. "Is your husband—er—in London?"

"Not at present," she answered, gravely. "He travels abroad a lot. Ah! *chérie*, let me introduce Captain Drummond—Madame Saumur."

And for a space there was utter silence. For Drummond and a woman already seated in the car were staring at one another speechlessly, while the Comtessa looked from one to the other in growing bewilderment.

"Enchanted, madame," said Drummond, at length. "It is a long time since we met, is it not? Saumur, did you say, Comtessa?"

"So you two know one another?" cried the Comtessa.

"A rose by any other name, dear lady," remarked Drummond, with a smile. "Does Madame also adorn the Custard Pot?"

He stood back as the chauffeur closed the door, and bowed.

"If so, my cup of happiness will be complete."

"POSING as a statue, old lad," said Darrell a few moments later. "Or watching the last of the loved one?"

"Madame Saumur, Peter," answered Drummond, dreamily. "Pansy Face's girl friend. She was in the car. Madame Saumur, Peter. Think of it."

"I'm thinking," said the other. "What about it?"

"She was Irma, Peter—our long-lost Irma Peterson"

"Irma!" cried Darrell, incredulously. "Rot, man."

"Do you suppose I'd make a mistake over her?" said Drummond with a grin.

"Did she say anything?"

"Not a word. We were both so flabbergasted for a moment or two that we gaped at one another like a couple of codfish. Then I made some fatuous remark and they pushed off."

"What an amazing thing!" said Jerningham as they got into a taxi. "How is it going to affect matters?"

"In this way, Ted. There's no earthly use now in our playing a canny game. We can still pretend, of course, that we agree with the verdict to-day, but we can't fool her into thinking we've dropped the matter. She knows us a great deal too well to believe it for an instant."

"And she didn't speak at all?"

Drummond shook his head.

"Not with her tongue. But just as the car drove off she gave me one look that said volumes. It was as clear as if she had shouted it through a megaphone. It's a fight to a finish this time."

(To be continued.)

PERPLEXITIES

1,072.—THE PROBLEM OF THE THREE FARMERS.

THREE farmers, accompanied by their wives, went to market. The names of the farmers were John, Albert, and George; the names of their wives—but not necessarily respectively—were Mary, Jane, and Elizabeth. Albert bought twice as many pigs as John's wife bought ducks; and the ducks that John's wife bought were twice as many as the pigs that Jane's husband bought. Jane bought no ducks, but she bought twice as many geese as Elizabeth bought; and the geese that Elizabeth bought were twice as many as the pigs that Albert bought. John's wife bought twice as many ducks as Albert's wife bought geese. What was the name of each man's wife?

1,073.—EXPANDING WORDS.

THERE are ten missing words in the following passage. The first is a word of one letter, which is successively "expanded" until it becomes a ten-letter word. The missing words, therefore, contain all the letters of the previous missing word (in any order), together with one additional letter (as, for instance, *o*, *on*, *not*, *tone*, *notes*, *sonnet*). The number of letters is indicated by the dots :—

When . was .. the tool-shed, I heard an unusual ... By .... of careful listening, I traced it to a dump at the end of the garden. I hurried there, and with my flat- ..... fork, turned over some leaves originally intended to be ..... for a bonfire. All the last flies of summer rushed out and flew round my head in such numbers that, using language that cannot be ....., I ..... back to the house. I've always disliked these ....., and I hate the way in which they buzz round me, and annoy me when I am taking ..... exercise.

A slight liberty has perhaps been taken with the last missing word but one.

1,074.—WATCH YOUR STOP.

THE passage which follows consists of a number of disconnected sentences from which all punctuation has been removed. Your task is to read it aloud, without any previous preparation, in the presence of an audience. The time limit is one minute :—

If you go to the zoo you will see elephants playing the saxophone you first take a deep breath and swallow the mouthpiece is then taken between the lips and firmly to boot polish people are proud to be or not to be is what hamlet said when bathing the baby care must be taken to clean up his sparking plugs should be the regular practice of every motorist who wants easy running does are female wives may forgive husbands never tell drew his bow and shot the apple through the inside left raced down the field and shot a gaol civilization being what it is is still necessary for locking up the undesirable flies fly pigs don't brown is a dentist and can be seen any day drawing stumps is a sign that the cricket match is over.

1,075.—REVOLVING LIGHTS.

THE night was dark, with mist below and cloud o'erhead. The bark rode at anchor, for the mariners had lost their bearings and the coast off which they lay was girt with many a reef and shoal. Suddenly the mist cleared. "See yonder light," said one, "that comes and goes, now red, now blue. 'Tis the Glumpshire light, which sendeth forth a ruddy beam that, travelling from north to east, and so through south to north again, maketh full circuit each minute of time; and likewise a blue, that goeth round in the same fashion, but one half so fast."

"Ay," said another, "and since 'tis known that whene'er the blue shineth toward the north, the red ray doth the same, we may by just comparison of time discover our bearing."

The red beam shone and passed; after a minute came the red again; and seventeen seconds later came the blue. Then the mist thickened, and they saw no more. "Ho, Thomas Navigator," they cried; "come, reckon us our bearing from yon lighthouse!" And he, being skilled in figures, did shortly discover that they lay therefrom at such and such an angle to eastward of the north.

How many degrees would this be?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

1,068.—LEGAL TENDER.

£12 12s. 8d.

The number of farthings was 12,128.

1,069—A TRANS-POSER.

E	M	I	T
M	I	T	E
I	T	E	M
T	I	M	E

1,070.—ACROSTIC.

C a L u M e T (the pipe of peace).
A d I p O s E ("pose" at the end).
M a N i K i N (also a bird of passerine family).
E l E m E n T (contains "men").

(*Came, line, moke, tent,* anagrammatized, made "Let men take income.")

1,071.—A CATCHY TALE.

THE data had been worded with the playful intention of mystifying the reader, and the difficulty of the problem was to translate the given conditions into plain algebraic terms. The following will make it clear :—

Let x be the true catch of Nunn, y of Seddy, z of Gort; and let a be the overstatement.

Then $x + a = 2(z + y + a)$ (1)

$y = \frac{1}{2}(x + a + z + a) - 6$ (2)

$z + a = 2(x - 2[y + a])$ (3)

Simplifying and equating (1) and (2) we arrive at

$$z + a = 4$$

and similarly equating (2) and (3) we arrive at

$$z + 3a = 8$$

$$z = 2 \text{ and } a = 2;$$

that is, Gort caught 2 fish, and boasted that he had caught 4.